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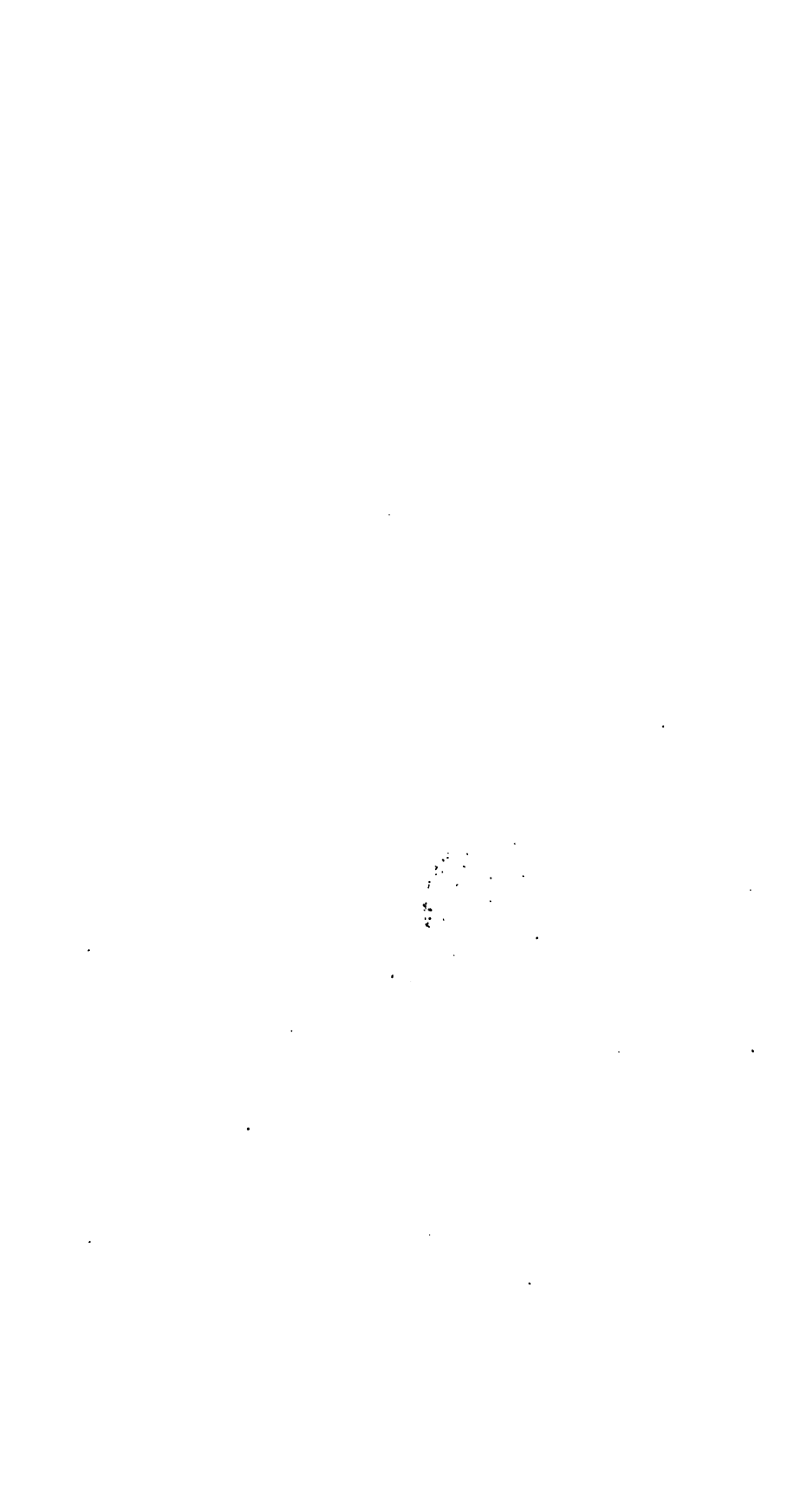


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MARJORY.



MARJORY

BY

MILLY DEANE



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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
<i>PROSERPINE,</i>	I

CHAPTER II.

<i>ANTOINETTE,</i>	36
------------------------------	----

CHAPTER III.

<i>GILES,</i>	56
-------------------------	----

CHAPTER IV.

<i>TWENTY-ONE,</i>	82
------------------------------	----

CHAPTER V.

<i>THE WHITE LADY,</i>	119
----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER VI.

<i>MY LOCKET,</i>	146
-----------------------------	-----



MARJORY.

M A R J O R Y.

CHAPTER I.

"MARJORY!"

"Yes!" shouted I, standing at the door of the old-fashioned alcove, in a scanty brown holland frock, and with short-cropped hair, and looking at Martha across the dark green pond, with its white water-lilies.

"You are to come at once, Miss Marjory."

"Yes!" I shouted again, and looked round with sorrow at my doll Proserpine, who was sitting on a chair, with her legs stretched straight out under a small table, arranged carefully for her daily dinner.

Generally it was a kind of Barmecide feast,—a mere make-believe; but it was no make-believe

to-day ; for before her was an apricot, the very first that year, which had been slipped into my hand by Thomas as I ran past him after my lessons.

What should I do? Should I leave the whole thing and return? I knew that I could leave Proserpine ; experience had told me that to other eyes than mine she was no vision of beauty, with her noseless face and battered cheeks. To me she remained the same as when I received her one market-day from Martha, and christened her after the goddess I had just been reading of, gathering my favourite daffodils in green meadows, under cloudless skies.

Yes, I could leave Proserpine, but not the apricot ; and, taking it in my hand, I ate it, slowly obeying Martha's orders, and walking along the green bank to the iron gates on the opposite side of the pond.

It was very tiresome to be interrupted in this way. It could not be that Martha wanted me, for she was very kind, and never called me to help her when she knew I was happy. Of course it was Patience with some seams to sew, or some

darning to be done ; and, fancy spending this summer afternoon stitching in the green parlour !

It was very annoying, for I had so few pleasures ; indeed, now that Giles and Michael were gone to school, the poetry of my life was shut up in the old garden, in the grey alcove, by the side of the dark green pond with its water-lilies ; all else was stupid and wearisome.

And yet not quite all else.

There was my daily visit to Lady Bridges, who was lonely now her boys were gone ; and my almost daily wanderings through the rooms at the old Hall, which I tenanted with the hooped ladies and powdered gentlemen whose pictures hung in the gallery.

I knew them all so well, that, had I met the gentle lady in pink satin, or even the fierce soldier in the dress of the Commonwealth, I hardly think I should have been frightened. I knew their histories, their sorrows and their joys ; and to me, so lonely and solitary, they were realities.

I passed the pond, and reached the iron gates. I crossed the little lawn under the beech trees, dragging one leg slowly behind the other, in no

hurry to reach the work which I expected was awaiting me ; but it was Patience's company voice that reached me, and I looked up quickly, and then stopped.

It was not Mrs. Markham, the rector's wife, who startled me ; I was accustomed to her, with her middle-aged face and juvenile bonnet ; but it was a girl of my own age who stood by her side, with long fair hair falling over her shoulders, and dressed with all the care my own toilette lacked.

It must be Antoinette ; the Antoinette I had heard of so often, whose grandmother, having been a favourite lady of the poor French Queen, had called her grandchild by her name. I had always pictured her to myself as melancholy and grave ; and yet here she stood before me smiling, sunny and happy.

"I have brought my little niece to see you, Marjory," said Mrs. Markham. "Antoinette, go and speak to Marjory,—you will soon be friends ; and, dear Miss Fairfax, what happiness early friendships are!"

"I have never found them so," answered Patience quietly, while a look of pain passed

over her face. "You can take Antoinette where you like, Marjory; only, don't be gone long."

I had not spoken,—I had stood still looking at this brilliant creature confided to my care, and I settled at once that we would not go into the walled garden, that she should not see Proserpine; indeed, that after seeing *her*, I should never be able to believe in Proserpine any more.

"Will you come with me?" I said at last; and we moved back again over the lawn. "We will go to the church, and up the Ghost's Walk to the Hall."

"Oh, you frighten me!" and Antoinette turned quite pale. "It's worse than the convent, where they only talked of ghosts when we were naughty."

"Well, you will like the church, for it is full of monuments and is very beautiful; and as for the ghost, she comes very seldom. Indeed, if it were not that she only comes when one of the Bridges die—and I love Lady Bridges, and Giles, and Michael—I should like to see her. I know her so well; she has a

sweet, kind face;—her picture hangs in the gallery.”

“It is not so bad in the daytime; but in the evening,—Oh! I should die of fright.”

“Should you? Poor Marie Antoinette saw worse sights than a poor white lady, and she did not die of fright; if you are called after her, you should try to be as brave as she was. Here we are;” and I pushed open the heavy door.

Antoinette drew closer to me, and shivered, as we came out of the warm summer sun.

“How white it is, and how empty,” she whispered.

“How could you have it anything but white? and it is full on Sundays. Look! here are the monuments to the Bridges’, this side. Do you see this lady, lying so quiet and peaceful with her hands clasped?—this is the poor Lady Bridges whom you are afraid of; and, look in front, Antoinette! those two boys kneeling in front were her two sons; and she went up and down that walk waiting for them, and they never came back, so her heart broke, and she died. Why! how frightened you are, Antoinette.

"Nobody ever talks like this to me in France. I don't like England, with its stone ladies and its *revenants*."

"Well, these monuments on the other side are ours, and they all lie quite still ; so, you need not be afraid."

"It is very cold ; we had better go,—I shall not be afraid in the sunshine. Let us go, Marjory !"

So we turned away from the monuments, which were as much my friends as the pictures at the Hall, and shut the door behind us.

"Ah ! I mind nothing here," said Antoinette. "I would even go up that walk."

"It is close by ; come," I answered : "it is our quickest way to the Hall, and I always go along it, though it is a little dark in the evening. Just here you can see the break in the yew trees, through which the poor lady watched, when her sons never came home ; you can see the road quite well,—there is a carriage coming up the hill now."

"What is at the end of the walk ?"

"Oh ! that is the Hall, and we will go up to it, and then go home another way."

"Be quick, then! I don't like this place; it is so *triste*."

She seemed to cast such sunlight round her, with her golden hair and beautiful child's face, that the dim shady walk appeared quite bright to me; but I went on quickly, and said no more.

"And who lives here?" she asked, as we stood under the oriel windows of the old house.

"Only Lady Bridges when the boys are at school. She lives all alone, and hardly ever leaves that room with the window looking down this walk; I won't tell you why, because you say you are frightened."

"No; I won't be frightened,—tell me."

"Well, if you won't be afraid I will tell you; Martha told me all about it. That room is at the end of the long gallery which runs right through the house; there are pictures, all down both sides, of people who lived there long ago; and among them is a picture of the poor lady whose sons were killed in the battle. It was when Giles and Michael were little boys, that Sir Giles Bridges went out hunting one winter's

day; and, while he was gone, the snow began to fall; and Lady Bridges, thinking he would be home very soon, came into the gallery, which has a great oriel window looking over the park, and she walked up and down, waiting for him, and looking out on the road every now-and-then. As she walked up and down, she came to the window which you see from here, and she saw that there was some one in white, standing at the opening which I showed you just now, all in the driving snow, and wringing her hands as if in great distress. Martha says that she rang the bell for somebody to go and help the poor thing; but when they reached the walk they could find no one. Sir Giles was brought home dead that night, killed by a fall from his horse, and then they knew that Lady Bridges had seen the White Lady. They don't know what she thought about it, but they fancy she knew who it was; for, as I said before, she has made the end of the gallery into a sitting-room, and she can look down this walk nearly all day."

"I should live a long way off; I should cut down the trees along the walk," said Antoinette,

whose eyes had never once wandered from my face while I had been speaking. "I would never look out of that window; I would go away, as we will go now. Come! the place is horrid."

"Hollo! stop!" shouted voices as we turned to go. "Marjory! Marjory!"

Antoinette jumped, seizing hold of my arms in terror; but I shook off her hand, and crying out, "It's only the boys!" I ran to meet them.

I can see them now running out of the old door, and Giles swinging down the balustrade of the stone steps which led to the walk, to the peril of the griffin at the end; while Michael followed more slowly.

"Here we are, Marjory! Hurrah for scarlet-fever! It has sent us home a fortnight before the holidays; aint it jolly?" and Giles stopped short, for he suddenly perceived Antoinette, not standing where I had left her, but at the opening which I had shown her as the spot where the White Lady had stood.

"Who is she, Madge?"

"A niece of Mrs. Markham's; her name is Antoinette."

"Does she stay long?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Bother! she'll spoil all our fun if she's to go about with you; but she'll suit Mike,—won't she, old boy; you hate the fishing and scrambling that Madge and I go in for; and she looks as if she were labelled 'Glass with care.' Come along, and tell her who we are."

"Oh! she knows," I answered, as we came near to her. "Antoinette! this is Giles, and this is Michael; and we'll all walk back together."

She looked very pretty, standing between the two deep green hedges, in her white dress; and we walked on chattering and laughing, till by degrees Giles and I, looking for nests here and squirrels there, had outstripped the others, and reached the drawing-room window, as Patience and Mrs. Markham stepped out.

"Giles, my dear boy!" cried both at once; for even Patience seemed to like Giles. "But, where's Antoinette?" added Mrs. Markham, quickly.

"Coming behind with Michael," said I. "They didn't care to see the nests I have been keeping

watch over for Giles;" and Mrs. Markham's face clouded, as the two came up slowly together.

I wondered why she should be angry; it was surely more natural for any one as dainty as Antoinette to walk quietly with Michael than to scamper with two such wild things as Giles and me; and I was sorry for her when she was told sharply that another time we were to keep together. However, Antoinette did not seem to mind; and Michael lay down on the grass to talk to Patience, after receiving a little nod from Mrs. Markham.

I must have been in an observing mood that day; for I remember that the difference she made between the brothers troubled me, and made me wonder.

"And how do you find dear Lady Bridges?" said Mrs. Markham, as she tied her bonnet-strings. "She was looking very pale when I saw her last;" and here she pulled the bows out carefully, and settled them under her chin.

"Oh! she's all right," answered Giles, who

hated a discussion on his mother's health ;
"What shall we do to-morrow, Madge?"

"Fish in the oval pond, if Michael likes," said I, anxious to bring him forward after Mrs. Markham's chilling nod.

"All right," said Michael, as he looked up. "If Giles and you don't take me through the water on the hardening system, and lay me up for a fortnight of the holidays between you, as you did last time! You'd better come, too, Antoinette."

"Certainly," said Mrs. Markham. "She will be delighted; will you call for her, dear Giles; and now we must be going. Good-bye, dear Miss Fairfax; as I said before, how pleasant these early friendships are;" and the lace, silk, and ribbons, which made up Mrs. Markham's attire, fluttered away, followed by Antoinette.

I looked after them; and my look finished with a sigh, as my eye wandered from the Paris frock and bonnet to my ill-made, outgrown, brown holland pinafore.

"Madge is sighing after the finery," laughed Giles. "Never mind, you look a world more

sensible. Why, you *do* look as if you could climb trees."

"Well, we must be going home," said Michael, who had followed Antoinette with his eyes till the last glimpse of her white frock had disappeared among the trees.

"Yes, *dear* Lady Bridges will be expecting us ; good-bye, *dear* Miss Fairfax ;" and, with a laugh, Giles put his arm on his brother's shoulder, and they sauntered away together.

I was quite quiet for a few minutes, waiting for Patience to speak ; it was such an unheard-of thing, my having a companion ; such a strange change in my sister's habits, to allow me to be thrown with a girl, who, with her fine clothes and convent life, embodied all that Patience most objected to.

Still Patience did not speak, and I sat and looked at her.

I admire her face, now that I see it with my woman's eyes ; but, in those childish days, the calmness which I love now appeared to me a severity from which I seemed never to free myself, as the same look was repeated in the puritan

ancestors who watched my dinner, caught me if I read a story-book, and even rebuked my jumping down stairs, from their several stations in the house.

Patience was always in black, and rarely smiled. The only bright thing about her was an old crystal locket surrounded with pearls; and, whenever she made me repeat her favourite text against wearing gold or pearls, I wondered silently that she did not obey it first herself; as for me, I was guiltless of possessing an ornament of any kind, and felt, therefore, that the verse was singularly inappropriate.

I never made out whether she disliked me or not; I only knew that she taught and lectured me, but never praised me, or gave me a smile.

All this passed through my mind as I sat and waited for Patience to speak; and at last she seemed to realise that I was expecting something, and put down the child's frock which she had taken up as Mrs. Markham disappeared.

"Lady Bridges thinks that a companion of your own age will be good for you, Marjory," she said; "and, as Antoinette has been placed

here by Providence for a few weeks, I have agreed that you should be together. I hope your principles are too thoroughly established to be shaken by the vanity of another girl; and as Mrs. Markham tells me she has been most carefully brought up, I must trust that Lady Bridges has advised rightly."

Patience added a few words about braiding the hair, and putting on of apparel; and then she took up the frock again, and began to gather the skirt as vigorously as if it were necessary to redeem the few moments wasted in speaking.

As for me, I slipped away. I ran through the iron gate, and round the pond to the alcove. There was Proserpine, my late goddess, sitting where I had left her; her almost featureless face staring at the opposite wall, and her legs stretched out straight before her.

Alas! for childish infatuation; my dream had fled. I had seen Antoinette, and the scales had fallen from my eyes; no longer could I call Proserpine beautiful. I saw now that her hair was ragged, that her cheeks were battered and discoloured, that her legs were leather with

very little bran ; I saw that the Proserpine I had loved had vanished never to return.

I don't know why I did it, but I suddenly took her up by one of those flabby arms, and, in a fit of passion, flung her away into the pond ; where she sank to the bottom with a gurgling sound, leaving nothing but ripples to mark her watery grave. I was ashamed the moment I had done it, but it was too late ; and I wandered back along the grass, leaving the first chapter of my young life behind me.

I sat next morning, with my History on my lap, in our parlour, waiting for Giles and Michael. Patience never called it a drawing-room ; I am sure she felt that the modern word would have brought a look of disapproval into the faces of the grim ancestors who lined the room.

There was an old divine, in a stiff white collar, who hung over the fireplace, and at whom I always glanced while Patience was scolding me, he seemed to agree with her so heartily ; and there was a lady in a ruff, with keys in her hand ; and a very prim little girl with a rose

held between two stiff fingers. These pictures seemed to suit our house, just as those at the Hall suited the place they were in; and I wondered if the people had made the houses, or the houses had made the people; whether, if the lady with the keys had lived at the Hall, she would have looked less sour; and, if the White Lady had lived down here, the sweet look would have faded out of her eyes.

"I wonder;" I went on aloud, as Martha entered the room with the butcher's book, which, as regularly as the day of the week came round, was laid at the same hour of the morning on the little table by Patience's chair. "I wonder, Martha, whether, if Lady Bridges had lived down here, and Patience had lived up there, they would have both been different."

"Bless you, child! folks is the same wherever they be; some would grumble and mourn even if they were a-sitting on the Queen's chair, with a golden crown on their heads; and some is like the man in 'Pilgrim's Progress,' who sang for joy when he was a-going through that disagreeable valley. And as for Miss Patience,

Miss Marjory,"—and Martha looked cautiously round,—“why, time was when she might have been lady at a bigger house than the Hall, as folks say. A friend of Sir Giles’ was mighty fond of her, but something came between them (I never clearly made out what was the matter, nor no one else neither). She worshipped the very ground he trod on, but she angered him with something she said (he was a little wild, folks say), and he went away a-swinging his stick round his head, and I see him go. She’s never forgot him, hasn’t Miss Patience. I’ve never seen him again but once, and that was in the Hall-pew one Sunday ; and Miss Patience, she saw him too. She gave a little gulp, like a chicken a-swallowing water, and turned quite pale.”

“And what did he look like, Martha ?” said I, feeling an awe and respect for Patience which I had never felt before.

“He looked straight before him, Miss Marjory, so lowering and thundery as if he’d have knocked the cherubim off Sir John’s marvel tablet, he looked at it so hard ; but he never turned his

eyes on her. I heard, after a while, that he died quite sudden-like, and Miss Patience has never bought ought but black gowns since then. She's had a sight of trouble surely, and it's dried up the smile in her heart like water in a sponge on a frosty night. Poor Miss Patience; she thinks a mortal deal of the old name, and when your Papa brought your Mama home, just before you were born, she made sure of your being a boy; and then, when you came and wasn't a boy, she wouldn't look at you till your poor Mama died and left you alone. But, though she's a bit stern with you, she's mighty kind at heart; and she'd give the gown off her back to them as need it. Now, there's Sir Giles and Master Michael; tie your bonnet properly, and keep it straight on your head, and don't be outshined by that fine Miss Toilette."

I took up the poor bonnet, and tried to follow her counsel; but it was a work of difficulty to make it look well; and, giving up the attempt at beautifying myself, I jumped out of the window, while my History shot a few yards into the room.

"Now we're off," cried Giles, "to pick up the fine young lady with rings on her fingers and bells on her toes, and march her up to the Hall for Mama to see;" and we walked, laughing and talking, across the smooth lawn, under the archway of clematis and roses, into the little wood that Antoinette and I had gone through the day before.

I was very happy as I walked and talked, for I was looking forward to my visit to Lady Bridges even more than usual.

It was my birthday,—my thirteenth birthday; and she was sure to have, not only a kind word and a loving kiss, but some little present as well; and my presents were very rare.

Patience had greeted me that morning with a book of sermons, at which I had looked with dread, foreseeing many weary Sundays before I had done with them; and dear old Martha had presented me with a piece of her last new cotton gown, to be made into a frock for Proserpine.

It was a gift which would have delighted me the day before, but now Proserpine lay cold and

wet at the bottom of the pond, and I had not the heart to tell Martha of her fate.

We left the wood, and crossed the churchyard with its yew trees, to the little gate opening into the Rectory garden, and passed under the roses, which were twined over the walk, to the pretty house covered with creepers, which were the pride of Mr. Markham's heart.

He himself, a kind, white-haired old man, was standing at the door with Antoinette, and occupying his time in searching for, and massacring the green flies which were overrunning his roses,—the only blood-thirsty act, I should imagine, he had ever been guilty of. How such a simple-hearted old man could ever have married Mrs. Markham, with her unreality, was a marvel to me even in those childish days.

"So glad to see you, boys! Greek getting on, eh?" said he, as he came forward with both hands stretched out. "Shocking long holidays,—quite shocking, upon my word! We had no such things in my day."

"Perhaps you had no scarlet fever, Sir," said Giles.

"Perhaps we were left to take our chance. Well, here is a little woman ready for you. I shall come to the pond, on my way back from Oaklands, to see that she has not been capsized among you all."

We carried her off, down a little grass glade with more roses, and up the Ghost's Walk, to the old Hall. The sun was shining into the walk, and had robbed it of the mystery of the evening before; and Antoinette, as she laughed and danced along, had apparently forgotten her terror.

We went up the steps into the square Hall, and up the staircase on the other side to the long gallery lined with pictures, where, at the end looking over the walk, in a sort of sitting-room, arranged with Indian screens, sat Lady Bridges knitting.

She was still quite a young woman, dressed in soft grey, with a shawl of some delicate white stuff hanging over her crimson chair. She was my ideal of all that was beautiful, and womanly, and good; and to-day, when she put out her hand, and said, "Many happy returns of the day,

dear child!" I flew half-way across the gallery, and nestled in her arms.

"And where is Antoinette?" she asked, looking up and keeping my hand in hers.

Antoinette came forward to speak, in an awkward, shy way, and then retreated with Michael into the large oriel window which overlooked the drive; while Lady Bridges turned again to me.

"Marjory in her 'teens!" she said; "it is a great age. There is a little present to mark such an important event;" and, opening a drawer of the Indian cabinet standing near, she took out a watch and chain, and put it round my neck.

I could hardly breathe with astonishment and delight; but, I am sure my face spoke my thanks, for she seemed to need no more.

"May it mark happy hours for my little Marjory! What are you doing, Giles?" for he was kneeling by her side, apparently occupied with counting the charms on her watch chain.

"All right, mother; here we are!" he said, scrambling to his feet. "My dear Miss Marjory Fairfax, allow me, in Michael's name and my own,

to present you with a slight offering, the more valuable as having been worn by our revered mother for many years;" and he produced a small heart-shaped gold locket containing his hair and his brother's, which Lady Bridges had worn since they first went to school, and which he had quietly abstracted.

"Oh, Giles! how can you?"

"It's all right; mother shall have another before we go back again, so like it that she won't know them apart. She don't mind it; do you, mother?" and, as he spoke, he slipped it on to the small key chain by my side.

"It is all right, Marjory," said Lady Bridges with a kind smile; "and now you shall all go off together, and not waste this lovely morning indoors. Luncheon shall be sent after you."

We scampered down the gallery, and down the stairs into the sunshine; Antoinette as merry as any of us.

"What a birthday it is, Giles!" I said, as we stood together on the banks; he fishing in a lordly manner, while I held the worms as I was bid. "What with dinner out-of-doors, and you

being at home, and my having a watch, it is too delightful,—the only take-off is that I hate the worms."

"Oh! they won't hurt you, don't look at them if you don't like them. It's a jolly day; but, how dull those two must be punting up and down!"

"It's cleaner work, at any rate."

"Cleaner work!" said Giles despisingly. "Well, I suppose we ought to be thinking of going back."

"Giles!" I said hesitatingly, "will you do something for me?"

"That depends."

"Well, it's wet work; so you'll like it. I got vexed with Proserpine yesterday, she looked so ugly, and I tossed her into the pond; and now I've done it I'm sorry. You see, Martha gave her to me, and will think I didn't care for her, and I have cared very much."

"And you want me to get her out? What a jolly lark! Let's go and drag at once."

"Oh, Giles! it must be done quietly. I shouldn't like Antoinette to see her."

"All right; we'll go directly. Come along; get the fish and the worms, and we'll call

Michael. "Here, Mike! we're going home. Are you coming, old fellow?"

"Go on; we'll follow," answered Michael. So we sauntered away, over the grass, and under the tall trees among the bracken, where the deer ran frightened away; and stopped at the foot of the rising ground on which the Hall stood.

The sun was getting low, and the large pile showed dark and grand against the sky.

"How jolly it looks from here!" said Giles.

"Yes, think what it will be when you are twenty-one, and come here never to go away again."

"Yes!" he answered thoughtfully; "but I half-wish it were never coming. It seems hard on Mike that we can't share and share alike, when there's only half-an-hour between us; and he is so little fit to battle with the world, while I should like knocking about a bit. It's a pity we can't change places."

"I don't think Michael cares about it," I said, looking back over the grass at him, as he and Antoinette came slowly up. "I don't think he wishes it different."

"No!" because there is no difference yet; but we were talking of twenty-one;" and Giles waited till his brother came up, and then he linked his arm in his, and we all walked on together.

Up the slope, into the old courtyard, where we left the fish, and, to my joy, the worms; once again down the Ghost Walk, where our steps echoed in a silence that had suddenly fallen upon us; under the roses, to the Rectory door, where we said "Good-night!" to Antoinette; through the churchyard, and on to the walled garden; when, having revealed the business on hand to Michael, our spirits returned, and we ran to the scene of last night's misfortune.

The water-lilies looked gentle and placid as ever, unmindful of the goddess lying below; the ducks swam over her grave, and we began to throw sticks to drive them away, while we discussed what steps we should take to reach her.

"I'll tell you what," said I; "Michael shall stand on the bank, and take care of my watch, for it will swing, perhaps, and get hurt; and, as I'm lightest, I'll go to the end of those planks which Thomas put up the other day when the

old ones were rotten ; then I'll look down, and point out where she is, while Giles shall stand on the strong part of the plank, and rake for her with the garden rake."

My plan was voted the best under the circumstances, and I advanced cautiously to the end, notwithstanding the warning creaking of the planks, which evidently had not yet been firmly fixed.

"Get the rake, Giles. I see her close to an old post under the water."

Giles got the rake, and put one foot on the plank ; it creaked more ominously than ever.

"Here she is, Giles!" I cried, as I bent over the water, pointing to Proserpine. I remember seeing the big rake plough through the water, and then I heard a crash, and I remember nothing more.

When I opened my eyes I looked round, but the pond and the lilies were gone, and my little white bed was in their place.

And yet I heard Giles' voice, though I could make out very few words ; there was something about "No better?" and Martha's voice in an-

swer ; and then I shut my eyes, and wondered what they were speaking about.

It was nearly dark when I opened them again, and everything was quiet. There was a tall figure standing by the window, which turned as I moved, and came towards my bed. I then saw that it was Patience, and as she stood by my side, she suddenly stooped and kissed me, and I felt sure she was crying.

How strange it all was, and this was the strangest thing of all,—I had never realised that Patience could cry !

“What has happened ?” I tried to say.

“You are to lie perfectly quiet, and not speak a word. I will send Martha at once ;” and Patience left the room.

Then came Martha, with a candle and some soup ; and then sleep came again, and when I woke it was morning ; and I began to understand that I had been very ill, and was beginning to get well.

“You knocked your head on a stake, my darling !” said Martha, as she poured soup down my throat. It ought to have been Thomas’



head instead ; doing his work by halves in that way."

"Patience was crying last night, Martha."

"Poor Miss Patience, she was mortal sorry to see you so bad. She nursed you day and night. She's quite forgave you being a girl now, as if you wouldn't have been a boy and carried on the old name if you could!"

"And Giles?"

"Oh, Sir Giles has been a-bothering, and a-moidering every day after you, like a wasp at a pot of jam. He says you must eat and drink now, and get well for the birthday."

"The birthday! Why, it's a long way off."

"Only a fortnight ; so finish the soup, and get strong."

Only a fortnight! how long then had I been ill?

"Here's Sir Giles a-coming along the passage again ; it's enough to wear the soul out of one's body. Yes, Sir Giles, I'm a-coming, Sir ;" and, as she opened the door, I heard a whispered conversation going on.

"Let me look at her one minute, Martha."

"No, not a minute, Sir Giles."

"Yes, I will;" and Giles' curly head came round the door, and nodded at me.

I nodded back again, and tried to speak, but I felt more inclined to cry.

He looked as if he were going to cry too, by the funny way his face puckered up; and then his head disappeared.

I was a long time getting well. The boys' birthday came, and found me still weak, ill, and miserable; and, it was only by going slowly in Lady Bridges' carriage, with my head on Martha's shoulder, that I was able to be at the park at all. I had promised to go to bed the instant I felt tired; and, as I so longed to be with the others, Patience had given way, and I was to sleep there.

The gallery was lighted up, and I lay back in Lady Bridges' arm-chair, and looked all down it.

Everybody seemed so happy. Everybody was moving about, only I was outside. There was Mrs. Markham nodding most affably to all, and her face beaming with delight as she looked at Antoinette, who was filling my place, dancing with Giles, and helping to do the honours.

For the first time in my life, I knew what jealousy was. She was doing all I should have done. She was preventing my being missed. Why had she come here at all? If she had stayed away I should not have hated Proserpine; I should not have drowned her; I should not have tried to fish her out; I should have been my own old self; and I was beginning to understand that the old wild Marjory, with her health and strength, was gone away for ever.

I knew it was wicked to be jealous; and I looked at the pictures on the wall, and tried to fancy them all dancing, as in old days they would have danced in the same gallery. I fancied the White Lady going up and down, talking as Lady Bridges was doing, and, by degrees, the real and unreal figures mingled into one. I fancied it was the White Lady who was dancing with Giles in and out of the country-dance, with her grave smile looking sadly down on his bright face; and I started up with fright.

"Don't let her; do stop her dancing with Giles!"

"What is it, dear child? you have been asleep," said Lady Bridges.

Yes, I must have been asleep; for the White Lady was in her frame again, and there was only Antoinette making a curtsey in Sir Roger de Coverley.

"Of course it is a great vexation," I overheard Mrs. Markham say, "not to be Queen of the ball."

"You shall come to bed, Marjory darling!" said Lady Bridges; and I crept away very willingly, and wetted my pillow with my tears.

Yes, the old Marjory was gone—gone for ever. I felt it day by day, as the holidays wore on and ended; and I found there was no more fishing and scrambling, no getting wet and getting dry again for me.

But, by degrees months passed, and Lady Bridges taught and comforted me. She got masters for me, and made me live with her for days together. She seemed to think of nothing but how to make me better and happier. She would show me that the old tomboy days could not have lasted; that I should be a better

and more useful woman for the quiet hours I was forced to spend. She taught me to admire Patience for her unselfishness and constant labour for others ; and, as holidays passed away after holidays, I found that my old grief was departing, that I was as much a companion to Giles, who had left off bird-nesting himself, as I had ever been in younger days ; and that I could now think of Antoinette, whom we had never seen again, without bitterness.

It was a very peaceful, very happy life. I devoured books in the old alcove, and talked them over with Lady Bridges in the long gallery. I taught in the school, and made frocks for Patience's poor people ; and so the years passed away, and I was nearly nineteen.

CHAPTER II.

YES! I was nearly nineteen; and it was a bright summer morning.

Patience had gone to a distant cottage to provide for the future of some orphans; and I was gathering roses and singing to myself, as I walked along the green bank, and thought how sweet the old garden was, with its sweet peas and tall white lilies. And how happy my life was; as sweet, and calm, and cheerful, as the old garden itself.

I laughed softly as I remembered the days long ago, when I was wild, and rough, and had nearly killed myself; and I laughed again when I recollected my jealousy of poor Antoinette, and my hatred of her at the tenant's ball.

That part of my life, now so far away, rose

up like a picture before me to-day, just as a well-recollected chord of music recalls the past. The chord that woke these echoes in my life was Antoinette herself, who was to have arrived at the Rectory the night before, and in whose honour I was gathering the flowers, that our parlour might look a little less grim than usual when she paid the visit Mrs. Markham had promised. I wandered about among the roses till I had gathered all that the trees could spare, and then I sauntered up the steps from the pond to the terrace above, where Thomas, mounted on a ladder, was nailing straggling branches to the wall.

As I approached, he slowly put his hammer into his pocket, and then, as slowly, descended from his high position; and, as I laid my hand on the latch of the iron gate, he had reached the ground, taken off his hat, rubbed his head thoroughly with his pocket-handkerchief, and said,—“Miss Marjory!”

“Yes, Thomas,” I answered, a little frightened; for the sight of a basket of flowers always excited his wrath.

"Yes, Thomas; it is only for to-day I've gathered them, and there are so many buds left."

"It's not the roses, Miss Marjory; I'll no deny that it's a sore trial to the man that budded them to see good roses spilt; but it's not the roses, to-day, Miss Marjory,—it's Martha."

"Martha!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, it is Martha; I want ye to say a word for me to Martha. Says I to her, ten years ago this day (that's to say, in an hour's time it will be ten years ago to-day), 'Martha, why shouldn't we be married? I've got a nice house, and a nice bit of money in the bank.' So, says she to me, 'Thomas, I'm agreeable; but no ways can I leave Miss Marjory, nor should you ask it.' So this day nine years ago, I says again the very same words; and says she to me, 'Thomas, I'll no deny as Miss Marjory can manage a bit without me now, but that there furniture in your parlour no ways suits me,—I must have mahogany, like Mrs. Evans.' Miss Marjory, I got that there furniture, but 'twasn't no good; each year she

puts me off with some excuse or other. Indeed, Miss Marjory, it's a worse trial than Jacob's;" and here Thomas stopped for lack of breath.

"And what am I to do, Thomas?"

"Well, Miss Marjory, in an hour's time my year will be up, and I shall ask her again. Can you say something, Miss, to make her more friendly-like?"

"I'll do my best; in an hour's time you will see if I have succeeded."

He again wiped his face, and replaced his hat, mounted the ladder, and went on nailing as before; while I, very much perplexed as to the manner in which I was to perform my mission, opened the iron gate, went across the lawn, and laid my basket of flowers on the sill of the dairy window.

There was Martha, patting, and pressing, and rolling the butter; but, as I watched her, I fancied that her manner was more flurried than usual, and she often raised her eyes to the kitchen clock, which she could see through the open door.

"Martha!" said I.

She gave such a jump that the pat of butter tumbled into the water, and had to be re-made ; and then she turned to the window.

" Really, Miss Marjory, you might find something better to do than to come a-frightening of people in this way."

" I never saw you nervous before, Martha ;" and then, thinking it better to have done with my business as soon as possible, I continued, " Thomas has been talking to me, Martha."

" Well, there aint no news in that, Miss, as I can see."

" But it's about you, Martha."

" He's no call to be using my name. I aint a flower, or a cutting, to be talked on."

" But, Martha, he's been waiting a long time."

" And maybe he'll have to wait a longer. I'm a bit flurried to-day to find an answer for him, and he'll be here in less than an hour ; so I'll trouble you, Miss Marjory, not to hinder me. When once you're gone to the Big House, Thomas will say there is no call for me to be putting him off and off, and I must rummage my head for another answer. It's worse ;" and here the

butter was beaten till I felt sorry for it ; "it's worse than thinking about dinner when the larder's empty, and the butcher not likely to come till to-morrow."

"But what do you mean, Martha? I'm not going to any big house."

"Oh! it's of no use putting me off, Miss Marjory,—I, who have lived in the family this twenty years; I might have been told sooner what all the village is a-talking of. I'll no deny, I'm put out above a bit."

"But what do people say, Martha? I don't know what you mean."

"Why, about you and Sir Giles, Miss Marjory ; I even overheard My Lady talking to Miss Patience yesterday, and saying as how it was the wish of her heart. And I, that should be proud to see my darling missus at the Hall, not to be told nothing."

I began to understand what she meant, as sentence after sentence poured out ; and, as I understood, the blood rushed to my face and to the tips of my fingers, till my cheeks were as red as the roses I held.

If Martha had spoken out of malice, she would hardly have turned the tables more entirely upon myself. To be talked about at all was dreadful, but to be talked about as Giles' wife was worse still. And yet,—and here I felt that I coloured deeper than ever,—if it was true that he loved me, I was the happiest girl in England.

But, was it true? I knew nothing of the world; his affection might be only that of one friend for another. And what was mine for him? As I turned away from the dairy-window without another word, I knew that I loved Giles with a love that would last for ever.

As I fetched the water, and put the roses into the old china bowls—though I mechanically arranged them for effect—I was passing my life in review. Yes, I could see now that Lady Bridges wished me to marry Giles; why else had she so carefully instructed me in all the family history, and taught, and cared for me. I remember now how she had always thrown us together; I even remembered the birthday, years ago, when she had smiled as

he gave me the locket. I took the locket out and kissed it. I was so happy, that the old parlour lost its grimness; the old Puritan seemed almost to smile; and I even ventured to sing a little as I went about, so entirely had I forgotten that Patience might come in from her orphans.

I don't know why I chose "Ye Banks and Braes," but I sang it without taking notice of what I was singing, till, as the words, "Ye'll break my heart, ye bonny birds," rang through the room, it was echoed by a musical laugh; and my song stopped suddenly, as I turned to see where the laugh came from.

At the door stood a girl of my own age, but taller and stouter, with an immense quantity of beautiful fair hair gathered at the back of her head into a gold net. She wore a white gown with a blue band, her straw hat with blue ribbons was in her hand; and, as she stood there in white and blue, with her beautiful face and yellow hair, in the same spot where she had stood six years ago, I knew that it was Antoinette.

“What a sad song, all about little birds and broken hearts! what a happy person you must be to sing it! One of our nuns said one day that it was only the happy people who sang the sad songs, and the sad people who sang the merry ones by way of contrast. I think she sang merry ones when she was by herself, poor thing! But, how very little changed everything is. You are grown a bit, but you are the same Marjory you were; and the Rectory is the same; and Aunt Jane is the same. She must have been saying ‘dear!’ ever since I went away, for it is such a habit now, that she almost says it to the tables and chairs. She is in a state of fuss to-day, for there’s an invitation from Lady Northbury for next week, and she don’t know whether it includes me or not.”

Antoinette stopped to take breath, and dropped into an arm-chair; and I swept the remainder of the roses into my basket, and then, remembering Thomas’ anger if any died out of water, I took them up again, and went on with my work hesitatingly.

"I must just put those roses into water, Antoinette ; they fade so soon !"

Oh, please go on ! I am quite happy here. How funnily you do your hair !"

I was going to say, "Giles likes it so !" but I stopped, for I could not say his name to-day, somehow, without blushing. So I only said, "I always do it in this way."

"Of course you do ; but it's funny for all that. Should you have known me ? I should have known you anywhere. How ill you were when I was here ! Are Sir Giles and his brother at the Hall ?"

"Michael is there," I answered, as she paused. "Giles only comes home in time for the coming of age ;" and then, feeling I was blushing, I hastily took up my hat, and proposed walking back with her to the Rectory.

"Well, I daresay it will be as well. I promised Aunt Jane not to stay long. Ciel ! why do you wear such an ugly hat ?" and she turned my old white straw round on her finger.

"It's all I have !" I answered quickly ; "and as I never see any one, it does very well for me."

All the old feelings of jealousy and dislike were coming back ; but I was determined not to be mastered by them.

"I brought plenty from Paris. You can have one if you like. Mama was anxious that I should make a good impression. So I have plenty of everything. Of course, poor Mama depends upon my establishing myself well before I return ; and there is no fear of that. But it's of no use expecting to do so here. You will have captured Sir Giles for yourself, and Mr. Bridges will have only a younger son's fortune, I suppose."

"I must speak one word to Thomas," said I, hoping to stop the conversation. "Will you wait here, by the gate, till I come?"

"Don't be long," said Antoinette ; and I heard her humming a French song as I ran over the lawn.

Thomas was walking very slowly, looking at his watch every few steps. As I came up, he put the basket of vegetables, which he was carrying, on the ground, and wiped his face.

"I've done all I could, Thomas."

"Thankee, Miss Marjory! It's mortal kind of ye. Except for the disgrace, I'd sooner have a turn at the treadmill once a-year, than pass twelve hours like this in each twelvemonth."

"But, Thomas, you might leave off asking her!"

"Eh! but I mun keep my word, Miss Marjory; I mun keep my word. And now time's up;" and he wiped his face again, put his handkerchief into his pocket, and walked briskly off.

"Here I am, Antoinette," said I, as I joined her again. "I daresay you remember this walk through the wood, and by the church to the Rectory."

"Oh, yes! I remember it all quite well. What a lonely wood it is! and then the church with the monuments! I remember it all. It's a very dreary-looking place, isn't it?" she added, as we passed the porch. "I dread Sunday;—one misses the pictures, and the lights, and the incense."

"I didn't know you were a Roman Catholic, Antoinette!" said I, in surprise.

"Oh! no more I am; mama said it would never answer for a girl with no *dot*. There are

so few English Catholic families, and in France, you know, a *dot* is indispensable. It was very sad!" she said pensively. "There was the Chevalier de Villefort—it was an agony parting from him;" and a few tears fell from Antoinette's eyes. "I have his hair in my pocket-book. We both felt it dreadfully; but I had no *dot*, and he was poor, and, *que voulez vous*, there was no use thinking of it."

"Poor Antoinette!" I said pityingly.

"You may well say, 'Poor Antoinette!' What I have suffered no one can tell,—all, all from duty, Marjory. There was M. de Chaponne too, he would not have minded my having no *dot*,—he adored me; but mama found out that we should have to live in such a very humble way, that she would not hear of it, and I had to give it up. Ah ciel! how I have suffered. I have M. de Chaponne's hair by the side of M. de Villefort's;" and more tears came into Antoinette's eyes, and trickled down her beautiful cheeks. "Of course, brought up as I have been, mama says, it would be easy for me to change my religion, if it appeared the best thing to do. Oh! here we

are ; I wonder what Aunt Jane has done about Lady Northbury ;" and Antoinette wiped the tears from her eyes, and led the way into the drawing-room.

As we entered, Mrs. Markham turned from the recess in which she was writing, with her pen in her hand, while a half-written note lay before her.

"Dear Marjory ! how do you do ? and Antoinette, dear child ! I have at last settled the matter. I shall send over to the Castle directly, to say that I accept the invitation with pleasure, and that Mr. Markham will stay at home to act chaperon to you. He can go nowhere, you know, just now, as John something (how I forget people's names) is ill. And then, if Lady Northbury means to include you, she will say so. So, dear Marjory ! take Antoinette with you this morning to call upon Lady Bridges. She must neglect that on no account ; and I'll finish my note."

How curiously Antoinette's last visit was repeating itself, I thought as we walked up the Ghost's Walk ; and I wondered if Antoinette remembered the story I had told her, as we

stopped for a moment at the opening in the trees which overlooked the park.

"Ah ciel!" said Antoinette, with a ringing laugh, "this is where I was frightened about the White Lady. It would be hard to frighten me now;" and she laughed again.

"Please don't, Antoinette; please don't," I said, as I laid my hand on her arm. "No one ever laughs at the story of the White Lady; please come away."

"You look as if you thought she'd hear you, you silly child; as if any one in the nineteenth century believed in such follies. But, we'll come away if you like, for I want to get my visit over. Lady Bridges, with her stiff, cold face, frightens me as much as one of these griffins would if they were alive;" and she patted a griffin on the cheek with her parasol as she went up the steps. "Did you say we should find Mr. Bridges at home?"

"He is busy in general at this time of the morning; he reads a great deal."

"Just like poor M. de Chaponne. Oh dear! they say he is so clever that he will do great things in France; and, if he does, how dreadfully

I shall feel not having been able to marry him ; there is nothing I adore like a great *carrière* ; but then, when a man is so young, you have to take so much on trust."

I led the way, as I had done the last time she came, up the staircase, and down the gallery, to the end looking over the Ghost's Walk. There was Lady Bridges, as usual, in her soft grey gown, and she put her hand out kindly to greet Antoinette.

I was a little nervous as to Antoinette's behaviour ; but I need not have been uneasy. She was as gentle, meek, and retiring as heart could desire.

"Are you going to stay long?" asked Lady Bridges.

"Some weeks, I think," said Antoinette ; "but, perhaps, on Monday I am going to the Castle with Aunt Jane."

"That will be pleasant for you," said Lady Bridges. "Is not that the day you are asked to go, Michael? And that reminds me that James must be ready for the answer to Lady Northbury's note. Is it written?"

"You have not yet introduced me to Madlle. D'Espinelle, Mother!" said Michael, as he rose from a table behind her chair. "I daresay she has forgotten the Michael Bridges of six years ago!"

"No, I have not!" said Antoinette, looking first up, and then shyly down. "I am not likely to forget such a happy visit in six years' time."

She looked so natural, so simple, so innocent, that I could hardly believe that she was the girl I had been walking with. As for Michael, she seemed to have cast a spell upon him, as he leaned on the back of his mother's chair; with his eyes fixed on Antoinette's face, while she talked in a pretty childish way of France, and the Louvre, and the peasants; though I remarked that she entirely abstained from mentioning the convent she had been brought up in.

"But that note, Michael!" said Lady Bridges again. "I am sure James is ready, and it ought to go."

Michael rang the bell, and then I saw him quietly tear up one note, and write another.

"What excuse have you given, Michael?" said his mother, as the servant left the room.

"I have accepted the invitation, Mother. You can spare me two days?"

"Yes! with my child here," she answered, smoothing my hair; "but I thought you said you should be bored?"

"Yes! so I thought at first; but, on the whole, I shall like to go."

"And now I must not let you stay, Marjory," said Lady Bridges. "Patience looked in just before you came, in some distress about those little Browns, who have to go to the Orphanage directly, and have few clothes to go in. She begged me to send you home directly, to help her, if you came in here this morning."

A message from Patience was always rigidly obeyed by me; and I rose at once to go, followed by Antoinette.

"It is too hot for reading!" said Michael; "I'll walk as far as the Rectory with you."

I looked up in astonishment, and Lady Bridges did the same. This was so unlike his usual habit of shirking woman's society; but he was on the ground, searching for Antoinette's glove; and our looks passed unheeded.

I should never have believed Antoinette could have been the same person, as we walked between the yews, and she talked in a learned way to Michael.

I could only suppose that I had misjudged her, and that in reality she was a well-read, well-informed girl, just emerged from school, instead of a selfish woman of the world.

"And now I must say 'Goodbye' to you both," she said, "for Aunt Jane will say my visit is not being paid to her at all. I daresay I shall see you to-morrow, Marjory;" and the Rectory door shut upon her.

"Well, I suppose it is 'Goodbye' to you now," I said to Michael. "The knight-errant will consider his duties discharged when one damsel is secure in her castle; and Virgil, or whoever he is, will regain his sway."

"Really, Marjory!" he answered, turning red; "you know it would be ridiculous to see you home; it was only civility to Madlle. D'Espinelle, and you are the same as a sister would be."

"It is all right," I said, laughing as I turned away across the lawn; "no one will carry me

off;" but, as I passed the Rectory window I stopped, for I thought Mrs. Markham was calling me.

Her voice was raised rather high, and, as I stood still for a moment, I heard her say, in an angry voice, "Now, once for all, I will not allow it. He cannot possibly have anything but some miserable younger brother's pittance, and I will not have you encourage him."

"I cannot prevent his walking home with me, Aunt Jane."

Then I knew that it was Michael they were speaking of, and that the words were not addressed to me, and I ran off home.

"Well, Martha," I said, as I dived my head into the dairy window between the roses; "Well, Martha! what excuse did you give?"

Martha turned her face slowly round from the cream she had been whipping up, and looked at me in the most solemn way.

"Well, Martha!"

"Well, Miss Marjory! I just took him to be shut of him. There!"

CHAPTER III.

"It's most annoying!" said Patience next morning, in a voice which showed that she was moved to the depths which lay under the rigid exterior; "It's most annoying! Just put that frock down one moment, Marjory, and listen to me. Here's Martha going to be married to Thomas. What are we to do, child?"

"Find another Martha," said I, feeling guilty from the hand I had had in the matter; "as you always say, Patience, that everything is arranged and provided for, of course there is another Martha waiting for us, if we can only find her."

"Of course, of course, child; but, if I don't know where she is, she may as well be in the middle of Africa. I thought you cared enough

for Martha to be as much annoyed as I am myself. And then Martha, who knows my ways, loves gossip well enough ; but, with some one fresh from the village, the chitter-chatter will be quite unbearable. I beg, Marjory, that on no account you allow Martha to repeat village tales to you ; this chattering and talking is most annoying—most annoying !”

I dragged the last tape into the top of the last little frock. I was sure I knew what tales Patience was thinking of, which had roused her to such unusual vehemence, but she must never know that I had heard them yesterday, and had thought of nothing else ever since.

“What are you thinking about, child?—why don’t you answer me?”

“I’m thinking that Sarah Brown will do for us, Patience. If you send those children to the Orphanage, Sarah must go out to service.”

“Yes, it would be a way of providing for her, certainly,” said Patience, thoughtfully ; quite thrown off her last subject by her interest in the new one. “She can’t churn, nor cook, nor indeed do anything ; but, if she has nothing

else to look forward to, it seems a call to take her. You can carry home the children's clothes this morning, Marjory, as they are finished, and see how they fit, and then you can bring me back word about Sarah."

"And I can look in at the Rectory coming back, and see Antoinette," I answered, tying up the clothes, putting on my hat, and stepping out of the window.

What a lovely walk it was—past the Hall, and down the steep slope by the oval pond, and then through a little copse to the thatched cottage, where the orphans lived!

Of course the frocks fitted; there was no particular fit necessary; and, of course, Sarah was delighted to come and be taught everything; at the prospect of which I sighed, as I walked back by the oval pond, and up the steep slope once more.

I looked at the Hall as it stood before me, with its mullioned windows, tall chimneys, and deep shadows; if I ever should be Giles' wife, this would be mine. There would be no more mending, darning, and cooking; no training

Sarah Browns; it would be a life like those in the fairy tales, where the prince and princess marry, and live happy ever after.

But, was I mercenary? was I thinking of what Giles had; not of Giles himself? No, no; and I laughed to myself, as I had laughed when I had hurried away from the dairy window only yesterday; if what Martha had said was true, it would have made no difference if Giles had been penniless Michael; I would have followed him to the end of the world.

I had reached the Rectory door by now, and was going into the drawing-room, to look for Antoinette, when Mrs. Markham's head appeared over the banisters.

"Oh, my dear child, I am so glad to see you! I am in great trouble; and dear Antoinette was so anxious to call upon you, that she left me an hour and a-half ago,—you have not seen her? Ah! but you've been to the Browns', I know. It is so good of dear Miss Fairfax to interest herself in those children; I wonder what they would have done without her, poor things! Do come upstairs, like a sweet child, and help me. We go

to the Castle on Monday, and to-day is Friday; and I have quite made up my mind to alter my gown like Antoinette's, with the little fulness behind, you know—the last fashion from Paris; and she has run away, and I can't see how to manage it, and Thornton is busy. If I might just put it round you and pin it? Ah yes! that's it; I am so much obliged; darling Antoinette could not stand still!"

"Is she going too?"

"Oh, yes! of course; dear Lady Northbury is delighted; and it is such an advantage for Antoinette to make her *début* in such a house as that. Ah! you want to go. Yes, of course, I am so much obliged to you; now, I need not trouble Antoinette. You will find her at home; I am sorry she has inflicted such a long visit on Miss Fairfax. You can hardly get past the chairs; well, it is difficult; but I was looking over my things before calling Thornton to pack; 'Goodbye;'" and, making the best of my road out of the bedroom,—which seemed a milliner's shop, with its caps and flowers and gowns,—I went my way to find Antoinette.

I had not far to go, for, under the shade of the first large beech tree in our little wood she sat, with Michael lying on the grass at her feet.

How very strange for Michael to be out at this time in the morning! Never before had either Giles or his mother found an inducement strong enough to drag him from his favourite books; but here he was, reading aloud to Antoinette.

I don't think he saw that she yawned once or twice, and was drawing little patterns on the sand with her parasol, but he looked up as he heard my step on the walk, and raised his hand impatiently.

"Oh! no, no, Mr. Bridges; pray don't stop her. I am sure we must put the remainder off to another day; and I am so much obliged to you. Poor, dear Dido! I know she's going to kill herself, and it seems such a pity, when she was still so young and pretty. If she had been getting a little old, I could understand it; but we'll kill Dido another day. Mr. Bridges has been translating Virgil to me,

The next day was the same story; only, a Latin grammar had taken the place of Virgil, and Antoinette, sitting under the same tree by Michael's side, was learning, and yawning, and making mistakes, and looking bewitchingly pretty; while Michael, apparently, was delighted with her folly.

I felt very sorry for him, as I passed by on my way to the Hall. I thought, if he only knew of the two curls of hair in Antoinette's pocket, reposing there on account of the poverty of their owners, that he would have gone to his books again. But he did not know; and, after all, Antoinette might change her mind, and marry a poor man for love. Indeed, on Sunday afternoon, when I saw them walking up and down under the churchyard trees, so near the Rectory that Mrs. Markham's wrath might be roused at any moment, I really believed that I had misjudged poor Antoinette, till she announced that Aunt Jane was taking a siesta.

They started next morning early, to be at the Castle by luncheon-time, and I saw them pass our iron gates when I was tying up carnation

in the garden; Mrs. Markham nodding to me from under a bower of roses; and Antoinette, fresh, and lovely, and smiling, in blue and white, as usual.

It was a relief to me to have Antoinette gone for a while. No place seemed to suit Michael and her to sit in so well as our wood, and it was very hard to have him looking like thunder whenever I ventured to walk either to or from home.

To-day, when I had finished my gardening, and Patience and I had had our early dinner, I started for my almost daily walk to the Hall.

It was my birthday again; but I had passed the age of birthdays, and even Martha, in her wedding preparations, had forgotten it. I was in the wood now, and sat down on the bench I was beginning to call the "Lovers' Seat," to luxuriate in the delight of having the place to myself again. How beautiful it all was, with the dancing shadows and tall ferns!

As I sat, I thought over the happy days I had spent in that copse. I remembered the birthday long ago, when Giles, and Michael, and

I had walked through it to the Hall. My mind travelled on to the results of that birth-day ; to my fall, my disappointment, to the vexation Antoinette had caused me ; and I felt tempted to wish she had gone back to Paris, instead of only to the Castle, lest she should darken my life again.

And, yet, how ridiculous it was to fancy that events repeated themselves ! I must walk on, and shake such folly off. Steps were coming along the path too, and my delicious feeling of being alone was going to be broken in upon. It seemed as if I were never to have my wood to myself again.

But as I began my journey again I stopped, for something in the footsteps made me start, and colour ; and the next moment the somebody came round the corner, and it was Giles.

I remember the moment now, and how he looked. I can shut my eyes and bring it back again, and almost fancy I hear his ringing laugh, and see his light figure, and dancing blue eyes.

I am sure there was no one like Giles.

As he came towards me, I felt that there *never*

had been another Giles, that others might write and talk of brothers, and lovers, and husbands; but Giles was better than all, and to come on my birthday too, the day which I had felt to be so commonplace, why I should mark it now as the best birthday of my life.

Ah, yes! and so it was.

I remember that I went down the walk to meet him; and I must have held out both my hands, for he took them both in his as he wished me birthday wishes.

“You did not expect me, Madge—did you? and no more does the little mother; but I have something I must settle before the great day, and I came home for that; and then I remembered whose day it was, and I walked this way to find you, which you see I’ve done. How pleased you are to see me, Madge! It’s worth while coming home for such a welcome, and now sit down a moment on this bench. I have not come empty-handed. Look, Marjory!” and he took a locket and chain from a case. “You must wear that, and think of me. Now put it on, and let me see it. Very pretty, indeed! and you must give me a gift in return. I

want that old rubbishy little heart that I gave you long ago. You can put anyone's hair you like in the new one, but I've a fancy for the old thing as a link with old school-days."

"You are sorry those days are all over, Giles?" said I, as I unfastened the locket from my watch-chain and gave it him.

"Yes!" he answered, as he opened it, and looked at the two little curls. "We have been so happy; I feel somehow that it is going to end. I have always dreaded this coming-of-age, you know, Madge;" and there was a sad tone in his voice very unlike the bright, careless Giles.

"I shall be glad to get the birth-day over, Madge, and feel that Mike and I are not divided. It is on his account that I'm come home to-day. I find that the old Grange, which we have so often walked to see, belongs to me, out-and-out, the day I'm of age; and I can do what I like with it. So old Cowper is to make out the deed of gift to Mike, and bring it down on the right day; and I came home now to go over it with Mike himself, and see what repairs

are needed, and whether it can't be made into the cosy old-world kind of house that a book-worm, like he is, would enjoy living in."

"Then, Giles, we had better go on soon, or else he will be off on his visit."

"What a lark, to think of Mike paying a visit! he will be too glad to be let off; he must send an excuse, as I'm come back on business. Stay a minute, it's so cool and shady."

I could have stayed for ever if he had wished it. Often, when I am sitting alone, I shut my eyes, and call that half-hour back again. I can see the very shadows on the beech trunks, the squirrels dancing along the boughs, the dragon-flies scudding about in the sunshine. I can see Giles in his light coat, with his bright curls, holding the little locket in his hand, and writing "Marjory," and "Mother," on the inside of the cover with his pen-knife.

"There! three M's—Mother, Marjory, and Michael; the three names which have made my life so happy, all in this little locket, and that on my watch-chain. If I'm captured by brigands, or otherwise lost, you can trace me

by this locket, Madge; and now, perhaps, we ought to go on for fear of missing Mike."

Yes! I can hear him say these words when I am dreaming over my young life. I see him stand lazily up, and run his fingers through his curls; and . . . I get up to follow him; I open my eyes, and the dream is gone.

But it was no dream on that birthday, years and years ago. That walk was a reality in alternate shade and sunshine—that lingering up between the yews to the old steps. Ah! it was real, and very happy.

"We shall just catch Michael," I said, as we went through the hall; "there's the dog-cart at the door, and his portmanteau coming down stairs."

"Halloo! Mike, old fellow!" called out Giles, as the door of the gallery opened, and Michael came out; "I'm come home for to-day. Can't you find an excuse, and say you will come to-morrow?" and he sprang up the staircase, two steps at a time.

"No," said Michael, while the bright light from an opposite window fell on his face, and I saw

how he coloured; "I'm so sorry to miss you, but it wouldn't do."

"Oh, yes, it would! for I'm really come on business; and anyone with a common share of wits would understand that, if we've business to talk over, you must stay."

"I really must go, Giles," reiterated Michael; "it's very unlucky, but it can't be helped."

"Where are you going? To the Castle? Oh! then, there's no trouble about it; for Lady Northbury has such a crowd always that one more or less don't signify. Do stay, old boy!"

"I must go, Giles, as I said before; though I daresay you are right, and that a poor younger brother would not be missed."

"You know I never meant that, Mike;" and Giles put his hand on his brother's shoulder.

"No, of course you didn't, and I was a brute to say it; but I must go, Giles; goodbye, the mare won't stand; I shall be back on Wednesday."

"And I shall be off again to-morrow. Goodbye."

I stood by Giles, at the big oriel window in

the gallery, as the dog-cart whirled away down the park.

"I was right, Madge ; he is beginning to feel the difference between us."

"You are wrong, Giles ; it's neither the money nor the place, I'm sure." I knew that Antoinette was the attraction at the Castle, that it was she who had come between the love of the two brothers, but I did not mention her name. Michael was sure to resent my repeating anything about him, and I was dreadfully afraid of offending him.

"Well ! on the whole, Madge, it may be best ; we'll keep the affair of the Grange a secret till the birthday. I'm not sure it isn't jollier that way after all ; it will be a surprise to him. Now we'll find the mother, and she shall come with us at once to look after it. Oh, there you are, Mother ! You see you only lose Mike to find me."

How her face brightened when she saw him ! how proud she looked when he kissed her ! the soft colour came into her cheek as she sat by the window, with me at her feet, listening to his plans, and smiling approval.

"Look, Lady Bridges!" said I, when Giles had finished, and the carriage was ordered; "look at my locket!"

"And look at mine," said Giles, showing the little battered heart. "Now Madge has a finer one, I am going to keep this for ever; and here is your name, and Marjory's too, scratched inside the case. Have you forgotten Madge to-day, Mother?"

"I am not likely to forget my Marjory. My present is to be a proper toilette for the birthday ball, but it is not come yet. I must have my child as fine as anyone,—as fine as Antoinette, shall we say, Marjory?"

Giles caught the sound of the name at once.

"Ah, yes, Antoinette! I remember her. As pretty as ever, Madge?"

"Prettier," I was obliged to answer.

"Well, she was always too fine by half for me; here's the carriage. Shall you soon be ready, Mother?"

Yes, she was ready directly; and we were on our way to the Grange.

The shadows were beginning to lengthen,

making the park look as sleepy as the cows themselves, who stood, swishing their tails, under the branches of the trees. And how lovely the copse was with its tumbled ground and masses of ferns; and the bit of common, purple with heather, surrounding a pond as blue as the sky above.

We had a few lanes to pass through, with high ivy-covered banks; and then we stopped at the entrance to the old house of which Giles had spoken.

"This is only an old farm gate, but we can soon put that to rights, and tidy up the road and the moat. Madge, what shall we do here? drain it, or clean it? Let us get out and poke about."

"Oh, clean it of course, Giles; who would drain a moat?"

"Sanitary Commissioners might suggest such a course; but we'll clean it if you like. The farm people live in the kitchen, you remember; but we will go round and enter like grand people by the front door. Let me be your stick, Mother."

It was a beautiful door, with a porch which might have belonged to a church. And the little hall, with its oak ceiling and wainscoting, was delightfully cool after the hot drive. There was a room full of cheese, with a small oriel window in it on one side. This, we settled, was to be the dining-room; and the one on the other side, full of bacon, was to be Michael's study. His bedroom was to be a room with a projecting window over the porch; and we settled that he could accommodate many friends in rooms which we discovered up and down queer passages, long ago given over to the rats and mice. Then there was, last, not least, the famous kitchen, where Mrs. Moore was standing, curtseying, and apologizing for the cheese and bacon.

"If I had only known, Sir Giles," said she, as she smoothed her apron and then plaited up a corner of it; "if I had only known, Sir Giles, things should have been rid up a bit, Sir!"

"Oh! it is for me to apologize, Mrs. Moore, for poking about so unceremoniously. I have settled to do up the old house, but that won't

interfere with you for the present in any way, you know. As for the cheese and bacon, there are two rooms round here at the back, which we can put in order for you."

"Oh! you don't put me about in no way, Sir Giles. It's an honour to see you, I'm sure, Sir!" And then, as we went down the garden-path to the carriage, where Lady Bridges, who had soon deserted us, was sitting, I saw Mrs. Moore and her sister whispering and smiling, and I caught the words, "Dower House for My Lady, of course."

"Wait a moment, Barton," said Giles, as we were driving off; "we'll turn this field into a garden, Madge, which will be a jolly one with this brook running through it; and we'll cut these trees down, to bring in the same view there is from the Hall. Now, Barton, drive on; and, Mother, while I'm up with the grouse you and Marjory must superintend all the putting in order of the old place, that it may be in trim for Michael when it becomes his. I don't wish to hand over an old barn to him. And so, Madge, Martha is going to make Thomas

a happy man. You must wait at the gate, Mother, while I congratulate."

"Please not, Giles; it is getting late."

"One moment, Mother. I must ask what my wedding present is to be. I am sure one is due after our many quarrels."

"Send him back at once, Marjory!" called out Lady Bridges, as we went through the iron gate and walked to the dairy window, where we knew we should find Martha.

There she was, looking so trim and neat, skimming the cream for tea, and very much pleased to see Giles as he bent over the window-sill, and with a low bow said, "Martha, I am come to congratulate you!" But Martha was taken with a fit of shyness, and returned again to her cream, and then, feeling that something was required of her, she put down the skimmer and turned to me.

"You can tell Sir Giles, Miss Marjory, that there aint no special call to coagulate. Thomas aint much, aint Thomas; and the house is but a poor thing, Miss Marjory, with no furniture to speak on."

"Well Martha," said Giles, "is there nothing I can do towards remedying its deficiencies? is there no humble offering which would be acceptable?"

"If so be, as Sir Giles is thinking of a wedding present, Miss Marjory," answered Martha, "I'll no deny that a tall clock would be acceptable. There's Thomas has been and bought a thing from 'Meriky, with a church, and a tree, and a man. It aint nothing to call a clock, it sits in the air a-holding on by its eyelids, not standing steady on the ground as much as to say, 'I've a right to be attended to.' I'll be ashamed to put the meat down by that clock."

"All right, Martha! I will order one after your own heart as I pass through Worsly. Goodbye!"

"Goodnight, Marjory!" said Lady Bridges; as I stood at the gate and watched them drive away.

"I shall be gone at cock-crow, Madge!" shouted Giles, as he stood up in the carriage before they turned into the lodge.

"Goodbye!" I said in answer; and then the

gates shut, and the sound of the wheels grew fainter till they died away in the distance, and I stood alone in the sun-set, alone in the rustling of the leaves ; the happy day was over.

With a sigh I turned away at last, and shut the gate.

The last bright gleam of sunshine fell upon the dairy window as I passed, and I went up and leaned against it, as Giles had done a quarter of an hour before.

The red light was on the creepers and on the lichens of the old house ; it had all looked glorious that little while ago ; but a shadow was now stealing slowly down, and robbing stone after stone and flower after flower of their borrowed brightness. Why did all that was happy, and glorious, and beautiful, come to an end ?

But Martha's voice broke upon the evening's silence, and her words were evidently addressed to Thomas.

"He's been and behaved himself as a gentleman and a barrow-night should !" were the words which greeted my ear. "Don't stand staring there like a stock, Thomas. He's been and gi'en

me a fine new clock, not a gimcrack thing like yon you've got there already, but one as stands on his own foundation."

I turned and looked in. Thomas, with a basket of fruit on his arm, was standing staring at me, and wiping his face with his pocket-handkerchief, in the inmost recesses of the kitchen; and, unwilling, I suppose, to hear any more depreciation of his clock, turned and fled.

"I wonder what has frit the man," continued Martha; till, catching a glimpse of me, she willingly poured the torrent of her eloquence my way.

"So, there you are again, Miss Marjory! I see, too, as how some one has been and gi'en you a token to-day, and it won't be long, neither, before my darling has a home of her own, and a ghost too, as she ought to have. I'll no deny but what it's been a sore tribulation to me to feel as how Susan, at the Hall, could throw such indignity upon me as to say: 'Fairfaxes wasn't old enough a family to be haunted.' It was only a month come Tuesday,

as I said, 'Susan, the Fairfaxes is as old as the oak trees in the park ; they were grand people afore the Revolution, when they lost all ;' and Susan with her pertness, she answers, 'the ghosts seem not to find 'em worth haunting, Martha.' It warn't enough to make me leave Miss Patience; but I'll no deny it's a rejoicing to me, Miss Marjory, to see you a-chosen by a young gentleman as keeps the best ghost in the country."

The sun sunk down suddenly, and a grey mist came slowly up. With a little shiver I turned away, and went in-doors to Patience.

CHAPTER IV.

"I HOPE Patience will approve," said Lady Bridges, looking earnestly at me, as I stood in my new ball-gown before the cheval glass in her bedroom.

"I hope she will," I answered doubtfully ; a low gown and short sleeves being, as I knew well, her special abhorrence.

"I want you to look well, and like the rest of the world. She cannot mind," said Lady Bridges courageously. "It could not be more simple,—could it, Ambrose?"

"Quite impossible, My Lady,—quite impossible ; to my mind, it's the very thing for a young lady's first ball," answered Ambrose ; "far more suitable than the one Miss Antoinette has had from Paris, to wear to-morrow. I am above gossiping, as

you know, My Lady ; but Mrs. Thornton pressed me to see it. It is all white silk, and tulle, and clouds of lace, My Lady. Miss Marjory's dress is far more suitable."

No doubt, I said to myself ; but how would the washed muslin (my only other garment) look by Antoinette's side. I must brave Patience and wear this, short sleeves and all. I could not look like a Cinderella at Giles' birthday-ball ; a Cinderella without the godmother.

"Will you help me to pack it up, Ambrose ?" I said aloud, as I took it off, put on my Summer cotton gown, and then busied myself with her to enshrine it once more in its carton full of silver paper.

"Look your best to-morrow night, Marjory !" said Lady Bridges, as I kissed her and said Goodbye.

Mine will be a poor best by the side of Antoinette, I thought, as I followed Martha and the carton up stairs to my room.

"Only a poor thing after all," said she, as she peeped into the box. "Nought but muslin, and a bit of net, and a bit of ribbon ; it couldn't be

much of a gown to be smuggled into a little box like this. I fear me, Miss Marjory, it won't take the shine out of Miss Toilette, as I hoped it would. Her fine clothes she is to wear to-morrow is the talk of the village."

I gave a little sigh. Why was I little, pale, and almost plain? what would Giles think of me when I was by Antoinette's side?

Antoinette in a muslin gown was a dangerous rival; but Antoinette dressed in white silk, and tulle, and lace, was more dangerous still.

The feeling that there might come a cloud over this happy day weighed upon my mind when I woke next morning. Why should every one talk of Antoinette? Was every one trying to rouse the demon of jealousy in my heart? And again, why should I mistrust her? Had I not met her walking with Michael only the day before, bright and smiling, and seemingly perfectly contented to walk by his side through life? Why should I trouble myself after all? Why should I care so much how I looked; how paltry it all was; how unlike a woman worthy of being Giles' wife! If he cared for me could I not trust him?

And the sun, shining through the roses into my room, soon swept away all sad troubled thoughts. Was not this Giles' birthday, with a blue unclouded sky—the very thing I had been hoping for!

We were to be at the Hall by one o'clock for luncheon; and the party was only to consist of ourselves, the Markhams, and the two guardians who were staying in the house.

The afternoon was to be devoted to the tenantry, with an ox roasted whole, and other amusements supposed to be an indispensable part of a coming-of-age; and the neighbours were invited to a ball in the evening.

The clock on the stairs struck half-past twelve as Patience and I started on our walk to the Hall; and then she walked so slowly; and when we arrived there, took so long taking off her bonnet and shawl, and smoothing her lace frills, that at last I felt in a fever of impatience. It seemed so much more than three weeks since Giles had waved his hand to me, and said, Goodbye; and now each minute was like an hour till I should see him again.

At last Patience made up her mind that she was without a wrinkle, and we went up stairs.

The door of the gallery was open, and, as we came in, I saw Giles standing at the oriel window with a stranger.

How happy I was as he came quickly up to me, and, with thanks to Patience for her good wishes, took my hand in his !

All anxiety, all fear of Antoinette vanished, as I stood there listening to his thanks for all I had done at the Grange.

"We shouldn't know how to do without you, Marjory, should we ? but it is such a disappointment that the deed of gift won't be here till to-morrow. Mr. Cowper is so busy that he was obliged to run away at twelve o'clock to-day, and had had no time to see after it before he came down. I don't think my mother heard you announced, Miss Fairfax ; she is behind the screen in her usual chair. Will you come and speak to her ?"

But, as they moved forward, the gentleman who had been talking to Giles when we entered, and whom I now remarked to be a peculiar man,

with his hair growing straight from his head, like a grey glory, made a dash forward at Patience, and caught her hand. "Miss Fairfax, I was sure! Bless my soul, how glad I am to see you again!" said he, as he pumped her arm up and down. "You remember Jack Wynstay? Ah! of course you do. I was always here in old days, and always coming down to tea at the red house with Giles and poor Charlie Hope. You remember poor Charlie went to the dogs, and died, poor fellow? Bless my soul, it only seems yesterday; and but you and me left out of the four!"

"I see Mr. Wynstay has already introduced himself; so, will you come, Patience, and speak to my brother?" And as Lady Bridges, who had come to meet us as soon as she heard Mr. Wynstay's voice, drew my sister's arm in hers, I saw that Patience had turned quite pale; and that she almost trembled, as, leaning on Lady Bridges, she moved away without answering Mr. Wynstay.

"Bless my soul!" said he, slapping himself on the forehead, "what a fool I was! Of course,

I remember now ; of course she turned pale when I spoke of Charlie. What a fool I was, to be sure ! And so this is Miss Marjory Fairfax, of whom I have heard, but whom I have never seen ! Are there any more charming young ladies hidden in your neighbourhood, Giles ? ”

“ Mr. and Mrs. Markham and Madlle. D’Espinelle ! ” announced the butler ; and Michael, who had been watching till now at the window, hurried forward, while I saw Giles start, and colour, as Antoinette entered the room.

“ Bless my soul ! ” I heard Mr. Wynstay mutter under his breath, and the next moment Giles was standing by Antoinette’s side, and was speaking in a strangely-hesitating manner.

“ I hope you have not forgotten me, Madlle. D’Espinelle ? ”

“ I never forget old friends,” answered Antoinette, with the same timid, downcast look her face had worn when Michael had first spoken to her in the same room.

I could hear no more ; for Mrs. Markham fluttered past me, making a crackling noise with her stiffly-starched skirts.

"Dear Lady Bridges! such an interesting occasion! how delighted you must be! I hope, Lord Colston, that you left dear Lady Colston well!"

"Quite well, I thank you!" answered Lord Colston, bending his stately head in to his shirt-collar, which was as stiff as Mrs. Markham's gown.

"And, dear Miss Fairfax! what a treat to see you out!—a *very* rare treat, Lord Colston. Miss Fairfax is quite a recluse;" and here Mrs. Markham looked round at Mr. Wynstay, as if meditating an affectionate speech; but he was talking to her husband, close to me, and hindering me from attending to Giles and Antoinette.

"Not remember me? Ah, well! I suppose I've grown old faster than the rest of the world, for I remember all of you. How long since I have seen you? Why, bless my soul! it's pretty well fifteen years. Colston and My Lady have managed affairs themselves, and have wanted nothing from me but my signature now and then. Afraid of me! that's the truth. I shall never forget Colston's face when the will was read over, and I was appointed co-guardian. I doubt even his

washer-woman having encountered such a look when she brought home his shirt-collars in a limp state. That was the last time I was here, Markham—the very last time. Fifteen years ago since poor Giles was buried.”

“I think luncheon is announced,” said Mr. Markham, “and this is hardly the day to recall the last on which we met.”

“Of course not,—of course not. What a fellow I am, to be sure; always making mistakes! Mrs. Markham, I am sure. Allow me to conduct you to luncheon; it is so seldom I am in England that I had almost forgotten the institution.”

I seemed never to be free from Mr. Wynstay; at luncheon he was again by my side, talking in a voice loud enough to drown all that was going on on the other side of the table, where Antoinette was sitting between the two brothers.

I could only guess that she was listening attentively to all Giles said, by the heavy frown which hung over Michael’s face, and which Giles was too busy carving and talking to perceive.

During a lull in the conversation, I overheard these words in Giles’ voice :—

"Ah, you remember that pond! Well, we'll fish there to-morrow."

"How charming!" I heard Antoinette answer; and she clasped her hands with delight.

But Mr. Wynstay's voice broke in here with its deep bass.

"Yes, Madam! I have lived much abroad; I may say almost entirely since, ah!—a-hem! since I was last in England."

"I hope it has been of benefit to your health," said Mrs. Markham, carefully dissecting an apricot.

"Well, Madam, it is difficult to say! Many people ask the same question, and my reply is always the same. My chest, Sir" (and here he put his hand on that part of his body), "has not improved as I could desire. It is unnecessary, Madam, to specify to the world in general which chest I mean."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Markham, looking at him with a puzzled expression.

"I suppose, Mr. Wynstay," said Lord Colston's voice from the top of the table, as he moved his head stiffly in our direction; "I suppose it is for

the benefit of your health, that you frequent Baden."

"Well, bless my soul, Colston! I think I may say, Yes. Not that I do much in that way. I only do in Rome as the Romans do, *il faut hurler avec les loups*, you know."

"I beg to say that I know nothing about places of that sort," answered Lord Colston, as he retired again into his stiff cravat, and then slowly rose to his legs. "Allow me, Laura, and allow me, Giles, and . . . and Michael," whom he seemed to have put in as an after-thought; "allow me, on this very auspicious occasion!"

"If you please, Colston, we leave speeches for after supper to-night, as the tenants are waiting for us."

"But we will drink their healths, said Mr. Wynstay. 'Health and happiness to you both!'"

The toast went round the table, and I tried to catch Giles' eye as I raised my glass to my lips, but he had forgotten to look at me; he was smiling at Antoinette, as with a pretty blush she sipped her wine; and I put down my glass

again. Afterwards I remembered that I had let the toast pass me unuttered.

"And now for the ox!" said Antoinette, as we all got up from luncheon. "Sir Giles says it is roasting on the grass, and I am dying to see it. Is it like the Boeuf on Mardi Gras that goes about dressed in ribbons?"

"Dressed, Madlle. D'Espinelle, indeed, but without the ribbons," said Mr. Wynstay, as he accompanied us down the Hall steps. "Have you a cigar, Giles? Thank you. There are two great divisions in the world,—those who have more cigars than they want, and those who have not enough."

"Are you not coming, Marjory?" said Giles, as I sat down under a tree and let them walk on.

"I don't want to see the ox," I answered. "I will wait for Lady Bridges."

Yesterday he would have stayed and asked me if I should be dull; to-day he said nothing, but walked on by Antoinette's side. I had caught the expression of Michael's face as he had turned away; the frown was deeper even than it had been before.

Poor Michael! I thought to myself, he is suffering too: and then I forgot him again; and looked after them with a heavy heart, as they went down the park.

I saw them approach the ring of people standing round the fire, and I saw Antoinette run away with her handkerchief to her face, and Giles run after her, and then they all came laughing up the slope again.

"Ah, Marjory! *quel horreur*," said Antoinette as she came within hearing; "you were wise to stay behind. I shall dream of it, Sir Giles."

"I am very sorry. I forgot you might dislike it. Pray sit down by Marjory, and rest yourself." And Antoinette did as she was desired, leaning against the tree and fanning herself with Giles' hat.

"Madlle. D'Espinelle thinks that a country-dance would be a good thing to pass the time after the dinner, Marjory."

"I daresay it would!" I answered quietly, remembering the country-dance years ago."

"And here comes Lady Bridges!" said Mr. Wynstay, "and round that corner behold advanc-

ing a long pile of puddings. So let us to the tent. Miss Marjory, may I offer my arm?"

"Marjory, will you come with me?" said Lady Bridges, who had not heard him speak, and she put her hand on Giles' arm, as we moved on together.

"You look tired, Marjory! have you been taking care of her, Giles; and have you secured her for the second quadrille to-night? the first must be a duty-dance with Lady Helen."

"Oh, Marjory! you must keep the first waltz for me. I have promised to dance that first Lancers with Madlle. D'Espinelle."

"Patience disapproves of waltzing," said Lady Bridges. "Surely Madlle. D'Espinelle will understand, and will change the dances when she knows the reason."

"I don't care about dancing, thank you, Lady Bridges;" and the heavy load settled still heavier on my heart as we entered the tent. I carried the plates, and looked after the potatoes. I talked to the women, and remembered in a strange way whose babies were teething, and whose daughters had gone to service; but it was all like a thing in

a dream, and as if at the same time I was on the other side of the table, following Giles and Antoinette round the tent.

Through all the hum of talking and clattering of dishes, I heard his voice and Antoinette's laugh. The only time I left off listening was as I passed the corner of the table, where two or three women had their heads together.

"Yes," I heard one say ; "I know as I heard for truth, it was Miss Marjory."

"I always doubted it myself," said another, "and ye see I was right. T'other one will be My Lady."

"Well, I'm mortal sorry," said the third ; "so pretty as Miss Marjory blushed that day she and Sir Giles was my way, talking of mending up the Old Grange."

So every one remarked it. So every one was seeing that I was forgotten, that Antoinette was preferred. The tent suffocated me, and I went and stood outside, looking away, over the lake and the trees, to the grey moors in the distance.

Giles and Antoinette were passing round the

side of the table I had just left, and their voices sounded through the canvas in my ear.

I could hear her trivial questions, and Giles' delighted answers. I could imagine her looking into his face, and her little blushes, and affected awkwardness.

Why did she ever come to the place? Could she not have found enough happiness to blast in Paris, without coming here to blast mine?

If Giles had known that the same tones and looks had all been bestowed on Michael only the day before—on poor Michael, whose heart was now breaking like mine!

There was silence at last, as some one proposed the health of the brothers, and then there came a ringing cheer, and then another and another.

They would be all pouring out of the tent directly; so I walked away to a beech tree, and sat down on one of the sweeping branches to wait. How often Giles had swung me on that branch years ago!

I was hidden by the leaves; and I watched the people leave the tent, and spread themselves over the park.

There was to be a children's tea directly, I knew. I had arranged it all only yesterday,—but yesterday seemed years away.

I saw the tea brought from the Hall with the cakes; and the schoolmistress bustling about collecting her children; and then Mr. Markham seemed to me to be looking for some one, as he searched about in a helpless way, and suddenly laid his hand on a white gown, just issuing from the tent.

I saw it was Antoinette; and as she turned to speak to him, she shrugged her shoulders, and looked annoyed; then, suddenly catching sight of me, she ran towards me.

“Oh, Marjory! Mr. Markham is looking everywhere for you to help him to pour out the children's tea. Here she is, Uncle!” As she ran away, I emerged from my hiding-place. It was as well to pour out tea as to do anything else; the hours must somehow be got rid of before it was time to go home. They would go quicker if I had something to do.

There was a puzzled look on Mr. Markham's face as I joined him.

"Where is Antoinette?" he said. "I asked her to come and help Miss Fairfax and Mrs. Markham; and she is gone."

"I shall do instead,—shall I not, Mr. Markham?"

"Oh yes, my dear! quite as well; come along, they are all waiting to begin."

"You are not looking well, Marjory!" said Lady Bridges, as a few minutes later she came up with Lord Colston; "those jugs are too heavy for you to lift. Mr. Wynstay, will you help Marjory?"

"I am quite well, and I want no help, thank you," I answered.

"Let us attend to the children," — Lady Bridges went on,— "and you go and join the country-dance, Marjory."

"I had rather not dance," I said again. "There, Johnny, you see your tea has gone over my gown, as I said it would;" and I stooped down to wipe up the stream which had poured over me from Johnny Strong's cup.

I thought that this misfortune would have distracted Lady Bridges' mind from the country-

dance, but, as soon as I was presentable again, she returned to the charge.

"My dear Marjory, you really must go! Mr. Wynstay, will you take Marjory away to the other young people?" and she laid her hand on mine, and looked into my face with a wistful look.

I took my hand away quickly;—was she sorry for me also? had she seen how I was suffering? Well, no one else should find it out; I would dance with the best of them, though my heart should break.

"If you can do without me, Lady Bridges, I shall be delighted to go and dance, if I can find a partner;" and I know I laughed a little hard laugh, which did not sound like my own, as I walked away.

"If you do not despise an old man, Miss Marjory, I am at your service," said Mr. Wynstay.

There was a gentler sound in his voice too. Was he pitying me? I put my arm in his, and he led me to the top of the country-dance; and, as I crossed hands, and went down and up again, I laughed and talked; no one should be sorry for me.

"I was wondering where you were," said Giles, as in the dance we met and crossed hands. "I thought you had deserted us like Mike, who has gone back to his books ages ago."

"Oh Marjory, what a mess on your gown!" said Antoinette; "it must be that horrid tea—I'm so sorry for you."

I went down without answering; and as we came back again I heard Antoinette say, "Poor, dear Marjory! she is so careless about her toilette."

I held my head higher, and I laughed and talked more than ever; and I determined that I would look my best that night, whatever Patience might say.

At last that long day came to an end; there was only the evening left; and I stood in my room, with the gown on, and one of Thomas' best roses in my hair.

"Ye look like a queen!" said Martha, as she pulled out my skirt, and walked backwards to the door in admiration. "I'd no thought that such a bit of a gown could stand out like that. And you've a colour in your cheek, and

a glint in your eye that I never saw before, Miss Marjory."

I looked in the glass, and I saw that she was right; if I only could look like that, no one would find out that I suffered.

"Let me look at you, Marjory!" said Patience from the parlour as I went down stairs. "Why, what gown is that, child?"

"It is a birthday present from Lady Bridges, Patience;" and I felt that I trembled a little, as I stood by the table on which she had laid the pinafore she was making. There was a stronger resemblance than ever to the divine over the mantelpiece, as she sat in a straight-backed chair, looking as stern, in her black gown and stiff linen collar, as he did in his cassock and bands.

"And this is the result of my careful training, Marjory! that you should wear a gown that any of the ancestors whom I have taught you to revere would blush to see you in. A low gown, and short sleeves!" and Patience gave a gasp of horror.

"Every one wears them, Patience; you would not have me different from the rest of the world?"

"I would have you remember to whom you belong, Marjory. Do you suppose that they—that I—have not suffered in our endeavour to follow out the commands of the Bible, and in fashioning our lives in accordance with its rules, instead of in accordance with the rules of the world? Do you suppose,"—and here her voice shook; "do you suppose that I have given up nothing; something worth more to me than a ball-dress?"

"I cannot help it, Patience. I am old enough now to know right and wrong for myself; and nothing shall prevent my looking like other people to-night. I am sorry to grieve you, but I cannot change my gown."

"I know what it is," said Patience, sadly; "it is the example of that French girl, with her manners, and her toilettes, and her hair, which is leading you astray. Can you not remember, Marjory, the words of St. Paul,—‘Not with gold, or pearls, or costly array.’"

"Indeed, Patience," I broke in; for the Hall carriage had stopped at the door; "I have often wondered at your laying such a stress

on those words when you wear the pearls yourself."

I was sorry the instant I had spoken. She turned very white as she listened; then she slowly unfastened the clasp of the chain, and took the locket off.

"See that thou make not thy brother to offend," I heard her say in a low voice. "I did not wear it out of pride in pearls and gold. I wore it—but I would sooner break all link with the past than cause you to err by my example. Will you change your gown now, Marjory?"

"No, indeed, Patience, I cannot; forgive me, but I cannot;" and I was gone.

The gallery was brilliantly lighted; and the dancing had already begun when I arrived.

When Giles had led Lady Helen to her seat he came to me, and talked and laughed; but he seemed hardly to know what he was saying; his eyes were fixed on the door. Fresh guests came streaming in; and, at last, just as the sets were forming for the Lancers, I saw a bright look of admiration on Giles' face, and he stepped forward. Yes! there was Antoinette

in the doorway, beautiful in her vapour-like gown.

"Giles," said his mother, "let me introduce you to Mr. Martin. I won't keep you a moment."

"May I have the honour of dancing this quadrille with you?" said old Mr. Wynstay, as Giles and Lady Bridges moved away. I was too glad to be doing something; anything was better than sitting still,—even dancing with Mr. Wynstay, of whom I had seen enough for one day, was better than that.

As we took our places, Antoinette came up the room; Michael had joined her, and a crowd just behind me stopped them, and made me overhear what they said.

"You are just in time, Antoinette; you remember this was to be my dance."

"Oh, Michael! but I thought afterwards that it would never do. Aunt Jane would scold me so dreadfully if we danced together so early in the evening; so I promised—"

"This is our dance, Madlle. D'Espinelle," said Giles, making his way up to her. "I began to fear I should never reach you. Are you

going to dance, old fellow? There's Lady Helen; she will get you through all the figures."

There was no time for an answer; the music was beginning, and Giles and Antoinette went off to find a *vis-a-vis*; but I had time to see Michael's face as he moved out of the way. The old frown had deepened almost into a scowl, which frightened me.

The Lancers seemed never-ending,—as never-ending as Mr. Wynstay's jokes; but both were over at last, and I was by Lady Bridges' side.

"Lady Northbury wishes to be introduced to you, Marjory," said she.

I was sure that Lady Northbury bowed, and smiled, and invited me to the Castle with Lady Bridges, thinking that I was going to be Giles' wife; for, as I stepped back into the deep window to let Mr. Markham pass, I heard her say something to her neighbour in a low voice, and then look at Giles.

The window was the best place after all. It was open, and the night air cooled my face; and it was dark, so that I could sit hidden from everyone, while I could see all that went on. So I sat

and watched, as I had sat and watched many years ago ; and I saw one dance follow another, and Giles and Antoinette seemed always together.

Now and then I saw him leave her side to dance some duty-dance ; but he always came back again, as I had fancied he would have come back to me if Antoinette had not been here.

"You see we were quite mistaken," said Lady Northbury, who had raised her voice while the music was going on, and then had forgotten to lower it ; "quite mistaken, Lord Colston, in our idea as to the future Chatelaine of this house. I had quite imagined from Lady Bridges' manner that it was to be that quiet little Miss Fairfax."

"Giles seems to have other intentions certainly," answered Lord Colston ; "but I hope it is nothing but a passing fancy. I should be much annoyed at his losing the opportunity of joining that property to his own. It is the greatest inconvenience having a few acres like that belonging to some one else so near the house."

"Besides, that young lady is hardly one whom Lady Bridges would approve of. I was very

thankful when she had left the Castle, and very sorry that I had asked her."

The music began again, and I heard no more ; but my cheeks burned notwithstanding the cool air, as I thought that everyone must be pitying me.

I was glad, at any rate, that I was forgotten. I would slip away, and get home without waiting for the carriage.

There was a general move now ; everyone was going down to supper, and I should get away. I opened the door into Lady Bridges' room, and went down the staircase which led from it on the other side. I knew my way so well, that I soon found the cloak-room, and Ambrose ; and begged for a pair of goloshes and a warm shawl.

"I have a headache, Ambrose ; and it would only vex Lady Bridges to know it ; the walk home will do me good."

"Very well, Miss Marjory !" said she, with a compassionate look, as I thought. It was time to go home and hide myself when even the servants had remarked Giles' neglect.

How very long she was getting the goloshes

and shawl! Surely some one would come in and find me, and ask why I was going home. But I forgave her when she returned in her bonnet and cloak; and, without saying a word, put on my shawl, tucked up my gown, and let me out of the garden door.

"I will see you home myself, Miss Marjory. My Lady would be uneasy if I did not;" and we walked silently together till we reached the red house.

"What! already back?" said Martha, as she opened the door.

Yes, "already back," as it seemed to her, but to me it felt like a century since I had left. As I folded my gown, and put it away, I could hardly believe that I was the same Marjory who had tried it on only the day before. The day before seemed to belong to a happy, sunny life; and happiness, I felt, had gone away for ever.

"Forgive me, Patience!" I said next morning when we were parting after breakfast, "I am sorry I grieved you last night. I shall not do so again. I don't suppose I shall ever go to another ball;" and, without waiting for an answer,

I went up stairs, and cried as if my heart would break.

But everything comes to an end, even crying at nineteen; and I went to the window and leaned out, ashamed of the traces which my tears had left.

I heard a pony-carriage drive through the gate, and I heard Lady Bridges ask for Patience, and then a rap came at my door.

"It is My Lady, Miss Marjory," said Martha putting in her head; "will you put on your hat and go out with her?"

The hat would hide my face; so I put it on, and dawdled, to give time to my eyes to recover themselves, and I went down stairs.

The parlour door was open, and Lady Bridges was talking to Patience. I caught the words:—

"All matters of this kind are better left alone, but how much I would give that that girl had never come!"

"These things are all ordered for us," answered Patience; "but here comes Marjory!"

"Will you drive with me, dear child?" said

Lady Bridges, as she came forward, and kissed me, and held my hand in hers.

"I am going to do a strange thing for me. Giles has set his heart on a fishing-afternoon, and a luncheon out of doors ; and I have promised to go too. You will come and take care of me, Marjory ?"

"But you will catch cold, Lady Bridges."

"I must risk a cold to-day. We shall find the boys there ; and Mr. Markham, and Madlle. D'Espinelle will join us ;" and, as she mentioned Antoinette's name, her voice changed a little.

"Are you going, Patience ?"

"No, Marjory ! with Martha going so soon I must be busy to-day."

So Lady Bridges and I started together in the pony-carriage, and I hoped that the air would cool my eyes before we reached the pond.

Lady Bridges spoke very little, and her face was harassed and sad. I was sure she had known nothing of Michael's love for Antoinette, and I rather wondered at her sadness ; but I was too much engrossed with my own thoughts to think much of any one else.

"Lord Colston and Mr. Wynstay are just gone;" she said, as we drove through the park. "They were both sorry not to see you to say Goodbye. Is your headache better, Marjory?"

"A little," I answered; I knew that she had not been deceived by that. "There is Antoinette by the pond already, but no Mr. Markham."

Lady Bridges gave an impatient jerk to the reins, as she whipped the pony on faster, and drew him up close to Giles, who was arranging a rod for Antoinette.

"What a treat this is, Mother! and now, Marjory, we must find her a comfortable seat out of the draught. Will you wait a minute, Madlle. D'Espinelle? I will be back directly. Mike, will you come and help?"

Michael was sitting on the stump of a tree close by, with a book in his hand, and his eyes fixed upon Antoinette; but he roused himself, and, in a sullen way, helped me to unpack the basket.

"You might help us, Antoinette," I said.

"Won't the gravy run out of something?" she answered, looking at her clean white gown;

"and then, lifting plates is such heavy work;" and she sank down on the stump which Michael had left.

"Mama says that I must never over-fatigue myself in the sun; I am not strong like Marjory."

She said this, for Giles' benefit, in a lower tone; and, in the clatter of the dishes, it did not reach Lady Bridges, who, throughout the luncheon, and throughout the fishing afterwards, kept a dragon-like watch over her and Giles.

He was too delighted to have his mother with him to have any objection to this, or even to find it out; but it chafed Antoinette, and she vented her wrath on poor Michael, refusing his assistance in the smallest matter.

"It is of no use, Mr. Bridges!" she said at last; "you cannot put the worms on; you hold them as if they would bite. Sir Giles does it much better."

Giles looked up quickly as his brother walked away and flung himself down; and he seemed suddenly to have a perception of something being wrong.

"It is beginning to get a little late for you, Mother," he said, after a moment's silence, during which Antoinette looked uncomfortable, and as if she felt she had gone too far.

"The pony-carriage will be here directly. Let us put all these things together, Marjory! Will you help us, Mike?" but Michael pulled some leaves to pieces, and never moved.

"Is Mr. Markham coming back for you, Madlle, D'Espinelle?" said Lady Bridges.

"Oh, yes! he will be here directly. I will wait."

"We cannot leave you here alone; and it is time for me to be at home. I will drive by the Rectory and put you down, and Mr. Markham will understand what has happened when he finds you gone."

Antoinette made a movement of discontent, but did not dare to object; and Giles put his mother into the pony-carriage, which had just arrived, and wrapped her carefully up.

"Thank you for coming, Mother! It has been like the days when we were little children,—when you used to come and watch lest we should be drowned!"

"There are dangers besides drowning, Giles!" and the mother and son looked into each other's faces, and he seemed to understand her.

"Will you get in, Madlle. D'Espinelle?" said he to Antoinette, courteously, but with a slightly changed manner.

She looked at him with a little stare of astonishment; and, taking her seat by Lady Bridges, they drove away together.

Giles sat down by the pond, not far from the spot where Michael was lying, still pulling at the leaves. When he had taken his rod to pieces he still sat on, with his eyes fixed upon his brother.

"We had better be going, Giles!" I said.

"Yes! the sun is getting low. Will you come, Mike?"

Michael rose from the ground and dropped the leaves; then, with the same dark look on his face that he had worn in the ball-room yesterday, he walked by Giles' side up the slope.

The sun was low, and the Hall stood out, dark and massive, from the light background of the pale green sky. I remembered Giles' words of

years ago, when we had walked together up the same slope, and he had wished that twenty-one might never come.

I wondered if he remembered his words. I think he did; for at the same spot he stopped, looked at Michael, and then went on again.

"There is some one coming to meet us, Giles," said I.

"It is letters, I think. I said that they were to bring me the second post. Yes, that's it; and the letter I was wanting, Marjory. You can fetch our rods from the pond," he added to the servant, as he tore the envelope open.

"All right!" he said, as he nodded to me; and then, going round to Michael, he put his hand upon his shoulder.

"Mike, old fellow!" said he, "you are somehow vexed with me; but forget it all now, and take this birthday present which ought to have come yesterday. Don't shake my hand off, Mike! only listen to me. This is a deed of gift of the old Grange and the land round it. It is all I have of my own, Mike; and I give it to you. I have had the Grange done up, Mike, and made

comfortable for you. Look up, old fellow! and tell me you forgive me for having all while you have nothing. Tell me that you are not owing me a grudge for that."

Giles had pressed the letter into Michael's hand; but here his brother looked up, and flung the letter and the hand away.

"Do you suppose, Giles," he said, in a tone of suppressed passion,—“do you suppose that it is the land—that it is the money which I want? Have I ever said so? Have I ever wished for more than I have? I want nothing; keep it all; only don't come here to steal away the only thing I care for in all the world—the woman whom I hoped to marry."

"Do you mean Madlle. D'Espinelle, Mike?"

"Yes, I mean Antoinette. She was mine till you came with your position, and your land, and all the things you think I envy, and carried her off from me."

"I had begun to suspect this, Mike, within the last hour; give me your hand, and tell me you forgive me."

We were in the court-yard now, and Michael,

again flinging away Giles' hand, sprang up the steps, saying,

"You cannot put the past right."

"I told you I dreaded twenty-one, Marjory ;" said Giles, as he followed him slowly into the house.

Sadly and wearily I turned to go home, while the branches of the elms in the avenue swung above my head, as the rising wind sighed through them and seemed to echo the sighing of my own heart.

CHAPTER V.

"HERE'S a bit of a note, Miss Marjory, as Sir Giles left with Thomas on his way to the station;" said Martha, coming into my room next morning. "Really, Thomas says, that with all Sir Giles' coming and going it puts him quite about. It was only yesterday as Sir Giles said he was at home for months, and now he's off like a Jack-in-a-box. But she ain't a-listening," I heard her say as she left the room.

It was true that I was not listening. I was looking at the note.

What could Giles have to say? I thought as I held it in my hand; and then I tore open the envelope, and saw these words,—

DEAR MARJORY,

Mike said that I could not put the past right, but I am doing my best. I am off for three or four weeks, by which time Madlle. D'Espinelle will be gone. I tried to say 'Goodbye' to Mike, but he would not open his door. I will write from Paris.

GILES BRIDGES.

This was all, and Giles was gone; but gone to come back soon; and gone to forget Antoinette—but, was it likely he would forget her.

I went up to the Hall that morning, and sat with Lady Bridges, who was again, pale and sad, reading at her accustomed window looking down the Ghost's Walk.

She put down her book as I came up to her, and said,—

"He is gone for a walking tour in Auvergne, Marjory;" and here her voice shook as she took my hand in hers.

"He will be back in a month, Lady Bridges," I answered quietly. What was Giles' absence to me, I thought. I must learn to forget him.

"Yes, and he has always wished to see Auvergne. So it is far wisest to go now, and then come back and settle down. I don't know

why I mind his leaving so much this time ; I suppose that I had set my heart on his taking his father's place at once, and the three weeks' waiting seems long."

I saw that Giles had told her nothing of Michael's anger ; so I held my peace too, and sat silently by the window till it was time to go.

"Goodbye, Lady Bridges ; I will come back to-morrow."

"Yes, dear child ! come every day till he comes back again ; the time is so long."

I walked slowly down the Ghost's Walk, and before I got to the end I turned to look at her. She was still sitting at the window with her eyes fixed on the opening in the yews.

I could not go into the Rectory and see Antoinette, who had brought all the sadness upon us ; but as I passed the church I saw the door was open, and I thought I would go in and rest a minute.

As I went in I started ; for there was Mr. Markham at the communion rails, and who should be standing before him but Martha and

Thomas, evidently just made man and wife. Sarah Brown and the clerk were the only other people in the church, and, as the couple left the chancel, I stepped into one of the seats to let them pass.

Thomas was rubbing his head with his handkerchief, and glanced at me uneasily; but Martha walked steadily on, with her arm tucked tightly in his, without seeming to notice that I was there.

"You never told me, Mr. Markham," said I, as he joined me in the porch.

"It was to be a profound secret, my dear! only, like most secrets it has been found out directly. So Giles is gone, Marjory!"

"Yes, for three weeks, Mr. Markham."

"It is soon to be off again. I wish he could have settled down: a master is needed in the place."

"He will be back in three weeks, and I am sure he will stay then." And three weeks pass very quickly, I said to myself, as I left the church-yard. I fancied by saying it often that I should persuade myself that they would; but

why should I be anxious for them to pass away ?
how could Giles' return mean anything to me now ?

When I reached the lawn I found Thomas hard at work, sweeping up the grass that he had mown in the early morning, as if nothing had happened ; and Martha was making up the butter unconcernedly at the dairy window.

"You see I found you out, Martha !"

"Yes, Miss Marjory, but not before it was done ; and now there need be no fussing about wedding breakfasts and such-like nonsense. Miss Patience she said something yesterday about a breakfast, so I goes to Thomas and I says ; Thomas, what with your population of the heart, let us have no fussing, let us get it over straight-way. The banns is published and done with, and there's no call to wait. I'll speak to Mr. Markham and he'll do it quiet enough ; and so he did. And now I'll get your dinner, Miss Marjory, and run across and get his tea, and then I'll see to things here, and tell Miss Patience at the end of the day ; and it will all be quiet and comfortable-like, as if nothing had happened at all."

And through all that week Martha kept running from cottage to house, and from house to cottage, like some one possessed, till Thomas could stand it no longer.

“Do'st thee think that I married thee for thy running, Martha? Nay, I married thee to have thee in the house, not in the garden all the day. Do'st think a Fairfax can't get along without thee to help them to live. Let the Missis send when she wants thee, and let us have a bit of peace.”

So Martha stayed at home, and allowed me to train Sarah my own way; making periodical dashes into the kitchen to see that all was right; while I taught Sarah, and sat with Lady Bridges, and my days flowed on as they had done before Antoinette had come. Lady Bridges had heard twice from Giles, and now he had been gone a week, and now ten days, and now it would soon be a fortnight. There was only a week left to wait for his return, when I found a letter from him beside my plate at breakfast-time.

How my heart beat when I saw Giles' handwriting. What could he be writing to me about?

I looked at the "Dear Marjory" at the beginning, and the date of a week ago, and then I put it away till I had a quiet moment. The quiet moment came at last, and, sitting at my window, I opened and read the letter. He wrote from Paris, and told me that he was just starting for Auvergne, leaving his servant and luggage at the hotel to wait for his return. "I may not stay in Auvergne, he continued, but go on to Switzerland, or the Pyrenees; but I shall certainly be back in a fortnight from this time. And now I want to tell you, Marjory, how much I have thought since I left home of what Michael said, and how vexed I have been with myself. I can see it all now, and I can see too how ill I behaved to you by forgetting such an old friendship, as yours and mine has been, for the acquaintance of an hour. I must have been infatuated, Marjory; for when I look back I seem to have forgotten you all during those two days; but the infatuation is over, and my own self returned; and now I can only hope that you will forget the past, and say that you will be my wife and my guardian angel for the rest of my life. I know that you

must have time to make up your mind after my conduct of the other day, so I ask for no answer now. I only ask you to have it ready by the time I come home, and let me read 'Yes' in your face when we meet."

How joyfully the birds sang as I laid the letter down; how sweet the roses were; how gloriously the sun shone! Were they the same birds, and sun, and roses which bloomed, and sang, and shone only yesterday?

I felt as if I had come out of darkness into bright daylight.

"What was your letter, Marjory?" said Patience's voice at my side.

I put it into her hand reluctantly. I hardly liked parting with my treasure for one moment; and then Patience read it slowly, every now and then stopping to make out an ill-written word, till I was nearly wild with impatience. As she reached the end she looked up quickly and joyfully, and stooped to kiss me as she put it back into my outstretched hand.

"I am so glad, Marjory, so thankful! you see he has found out before it is too late, that all is

not gold that glitters. I must go up at once to Lady Bridges ; and, as it happened, I was just going there. Since the place must go to a new name, I am so satisfied that it should belong to Giles. I shall tell her you will be with her before long, Marjory ;" and then, as she shut the door, I heard her say to herself, "I cannot see why it should not be Fairfax Bridges !"

And I sat on and dreamed ; I imagined Giles coming home, and my going to meet him, and saying, "Yes, Giles, I am yours for ever and ever!" It was only a week to wait, and then I should be happy for evermore. It was difficult to do anything but sit at the window in the sunlight, with Giles' letter on my lap. I had been so sad, and now I was so joyful. I had chased the thoughts of Giles away, and now he was mine ; I might think of him all day.

I sat and built bright castles in the air, and half-hour followed half-hour, till it was too late to think of seeing Lady Bridges before the afternoon.

I was vexed with myself, as I knew that she would be expecting me ; but what was more

provoking still, was to see Mrs. Markham walk into the parlour directly after dinner.

"I have not seen you except in church, since the birthday, Miss Fairfax," she said as she sat down and smoothed her flounces. "Nor you either, dear Marjory! Someone told me that you had a headache at the ball. I hope it is gone by now."

I assured her that it had not lasted a whole fortnight; and she went on,—

"I am come especially to-day, dear Miss Fairfax! to apologize for darling Antoinette. She has been kept in-doors with a dreadful cold, caught that day you all fished. You remember, Marjory? She thinks that coming back in the pony-carriage gave it her; and now the instant that she is well again her mother has sent for her to come to Paris; and I had to let her go in a hurry yesterday, without her being able to say 'Goodbye' to you or to dear Lady Bridges. I think,"—and here Mrs. Markham dropped her voice,—“that there is some most eligible marriage on the *tapis*; but I shall hear further in a day or two, and till then not a

word. Antoinette will make an admirable wife. I must not stay, dear Miss Fairfax ; I must go on to Lady Bridges to express my sorrow for Antoinette's apparent rudeness. *Au revoir*," and Mrs. Markham rustled out of the room.

But there was still another hindrance to my going to the Hall. Sarah appeared in tears, to tell me that the butter refused to be made up, and that she was afraid of calling Martha to her assistance. So it was late in the afternoon before I at last found myself in the long gallery, and standing by Lady Bridges.

"I have been waiting for you all day, my child," she said eagerly. "You have heard from Giles, Marjory?" and she took both my hands in hers, and looked into my face.

"Yes, I have heard from Giles, Lady Bridges."

"And you will say 'Yes' when he comes, Marjory? you will forget the passing fancy of the other day; you will not let it stand in my boy's way. Say that it shall be 'Yes,' Marjory!"

"How could it be anything else, Lady Bridges?" and with a little sob she folded me in her arms.

"You will stay till dark, and Ambrose shall

walk home with you, Marjory. You are my daughter now; I cannot part with you."

And we sat together, hand in hand, looking down on the yews where the shadows grew deeper and deeper.

We were very silent, I think because we both felt too happy to talk.

The shadows deepened, and we still sat on, till, as I looked, I saw some one coming down the walk.

"I thought Antoinette went yesterday," I said, "but there she is in her white gown."

I felt a tightened grasp on my hand, and I looked at Lady Bridges.

Her eyes were fixed on the figure, and her face was full of terror.

I looked down the walk again, and I saw the person I had taken for Antoinette come slowly towards us.

She stopped at the entrance of the yew hedge, and flung her arms above her head, while she wrung her hands as if in agony. She seemed to utter cries, but no cry came through the open window; and then, sobbing and clasping

her hands, she walked away, and was hidden in the shadows.

There was no sound in the room, except a gasping sigh from Lady Bridges, and then, as Michael's step sounded on the stairs, she said,

"It was the White Lady, Marjory! and there is Michael; so you see it is Giles who is gone."

No other letter came. No letter from Auvergne or Switzerland; and that week passed, and then the next, and still there came nothing but a letter from James to ask if his master had come straight back to England instead of passing through Paris.

"Will you take this to Michael," said Lady Bridges, when I had read it, "and ask him what he wishes done?"

She had begun to speak of Michael now as though he were master, but she never mentioned Giles' name.

I found Michael in the library busy among his books and papers; and, as I went in, he looked annoyed at the interruption, and put his pen down impatiently.

"James has written for instructions, Michael," said I, "thinking Giles has come back here as he has not returned to Paris, and Lady Bridges has sent you the letter."

"Antoinette is in France," said Michael moodily; "he is with her somewhere or other, you may be sure."

"You misjudge Giles, Michael; here is a note he wrote to me the day he left;" and I laid the letter by his side. "You see how you grieved him by not saying 'Goodbye.'"

He read the note, and a softened look stole over his face, but he laid it down and said,

"No one could forget Antoinette."

"Will you write to James, Michael?"

"Giles will be back soon enough, he can wait till he comes. My mother had better write."

"She and I saw the White Lady the other night, Michael," I said hesitatingly.

He gave a sudden start in his chair, and rose to his feet.

"What an absurdity this is, Marjory! how ridiculous women are; they are always fancying

things! The White Lady indeed!" and then he began to walk up and down the room.

"It must have been in the evening when the mist was rising, and you and my mother must have frightened yourselves till you could fancy anything; how very absurd! Give me James' letter; I will answer it myself, and tell him to send word where Giles went to. How ridiculous it is!" But, as I left the room, I saw that his hand was trembling as he wrote, and that his face was very white.

But James could send no clue to Giles' whereabouts. He had started for Auvergne, but had said that he might go to the Pyrenees or Switzerland instead.

"I shall write to Uncle Wynstay, Mother, to ask him to inquire where Giles is likely to be; he may have heard from him," said Michael, the day that the letter came. "Of course it is all nonsense and Giles will be here directly, but he can hardly be annoyed at my writing, I think."

"Yes, it would be best," said Lady Bridges; and I heard her say in a low voice, "But I shall go to him, he will not come back to me."

"I think," continued Michael, walking up and down the gallery, "that, besides writing to Uncle Wynstay, I shall run across to Paris to-morrow and see James myself. Of course, somebody knows whereabouts Giles is, and letters are so unsatisfactory. I have no doubt that Giles will be back before I come home again, but you must explain to him that we were getting uneasy, or rather that you and Marjory were frightening yourselves; for I really don't see any cause for uneasiness myself."

"You will not run into danger, Michael," said his mother, clasping and unclasping her hands nervously. "I cannot spare both my boys."

"Of course Giles is safe, Mother, and I shall be all right too. I am only going to find out what orders he gave James. It is quite evident that, whatever they were, he has forgotten them. As likely as not Giles told him to come home, and then of course he would not hurry back."

But it was clear, however hopefully Michael wrote the first day he was in Paris, that he had found no clue to Giles as yet.

In his second letter he told us that Mr.

Wynstay had joined him, and that they were going to Auvergne together; as Mr. Wynstay luckily had friends there, so that they would consequently get information directly.

But from Auvergne he wrote that it was ridiculous to think of tracing him there. No one remarked a walking tourist, and his passport could not have been asked for. Indeed, they had made up their minds that he had never been there at all, and were going on to Switzerland, where they should, of course, meet him directly, unless he was already at home.

But the letters from Switzerland threw no light on Giles' fate. If he had travelled there he had written his name in no hotel book.

They searched Geneva, and Chamouni, and the valley of the Rhone, and then went on to the Pyrenees; but there was the same answer given to them everywhere. "So many travellers and so many young Englishmen came that it was impossible to remember each one."

It was a cold day in the middle of November when Michael came home at last.

I remember how the wind howled through the

trees as I walked under them, and how the dead leaves whirled round Michael's head as he came towards me down the avenue.

I held out my hand without speaking; what question could I ask?

He was looking harassed and anxious as he turned back with me.

"I have heard nothing of him, Marjory! I half-hoped I might have found him here before me. I have brought James home—there was no use leaving him in Paris."

"Have you seen Lady Bridges?"

"Yes; I have been home an hour, Marjory." Then he said in a hesitating tone, "As a last chance,—I mean as a last chance of hearing of Giles in Europe,—I went to see Antoinette as I came back."

"Well, Michael?"

"She knows nothing of him; indeed, she has not seen him since she left here. I think now that he has gone away on a longer journey—perhaps to America—to show me that he has forgotten her. It would be just the sort of chivalrous thing he would do; and a letter

has been lost ; of course, if I am right, he will wonder at not hearing from us and will write again. And he will want money ; so I have asked the people at Coutts' to tell me the instant they hear, and to make inquiries at New York and Boston."

We reached the end of the avenue, and, entering the old courtyard, stood for a moment on the very spot where Michael and Giles had parted.

"This is where I saw him last," said Michael ; "where I said he could never undo the past. I would give my life to undo the past myself, and unsay those words. I would give all the happiness I ever hope to have in this world to see him standing here again. Sometimes, Marjory, my heart fails, and I say, 'Will he ever come back?'"

The wind, which had lulled for a moment, rose again and shook the elms in the avenue, then rushed into the courtyard and swept around us.

It beat against the walls of the old house, and seemed to answer, "Never!" then, finding

an outlet on the other side of the court, it raced, shrieking and sobbing, down the Ghost's Walk.

I left Michael standing there, and went up the old steps, and through the passage which led to the great hall.

A gust from the wintry day outside had followed me in, and had crept behind the pictures, making them move as I passed; and when I echoed Michael's words to myself, "Will he ever come back?" they seemed to shake their heads mournfully, and answer, "Never!"

I stood by Lady Bridges, and laid my hand on the back of the chair. The return of health and strength, which had made us so happy in the summer, was all gone; and, as she leaned listlessly back, I saw streaks of white in her brown hair.

"Michael has brought no news, Mother." (I always called her "Mother" now.)

"Did you think he would, Marjory? Do you think that we were both mistaken in what we saw?"

"I cannot tell, I cannot tell!" I cried. "Oh! what will life be if Giles never comes back?"

Would it be always what it was now,—waking up with a heavy load which hung like a chain about me all day, and then sleeping only to start up from a dream that he was at home again, only to remember that it was a delusion?

But why should we fancy he was dead—a thing so unlikely to be true?

Of course he had written to explain some change of plans, and the letter had been lost. (How often letters are lost!) Or, if not, he might have been taken ill in some out-of-the-way place overlooked by Michael and Mr. Wynstay, and not be able to write. Ah! if we only knew where he was, that we might nurse him and fetch him home. A letter would come directly. Some one would write for him; or he would wait till he was able to do it himself, so as not to alarm his mother.

How he would laugh at us for our impatience when he came back to us once more!

But we waited, and no letter came.

Christmas arrived, and was passed in silence. We hung no mistletoe in the centre of the

gallery, and we forgot to put up the holly. How could we be glad when Giles was away?

We were all hopeless now about his return; all hopeless except Michael, who still refused to allow that there was even anything strange in this prolonged absence.

“He will explain it all when he comes back, Marjory. I have been settling to-day to look after the repairs needed on the estate, and things of that kind. It can't annoy him, I think, when he comes back, to find I have been taking his place for a time. Can it?” And he looked into my face with an expression so piteous, that I could have grieved for him if my heart had not been past grieving.

It was such a change to see Michael desert his books and toil about the estate, spending his time in the farms and cottages, that Giles might find all things in order when he came home.

The spring came, and then the summer, and we had got used to our sorrow in a measure, when Michael said that he was going to Paris.

“To see Antoinette?” I asked hesitatingly.

"Yes," he answered, quietly, and in a voice unlike the petulant Michael of old days. "Giles may come back when he knows we are married ; that is to say, if Antoinette will have me still."

So a month later Michael brought home his wife, and the church-bells rang to welcome them.

"You must come with me," said Patience the morning after their return, as she came into the parlour with her bonnet on. "We must pay our respects to the bride, Marjory ; and every hour's delay will only make it worse for you."

"Yes, Patience, you are right ; but we are spared our walk, for here she is."

There she was, with Michael behind her, standing in the doorway, in her favourite white and blue, as she had stood a year ago when she had come to bring desolation to our homes.

"We were coming to see you, Antoinette," said Patience, advancing towards her.

"Oh, were you ! I wish, then, I had not come ; but Michael made me do it. It was very tiresome ; the sun is getting hot, and it is disagreeable walking so soon after breakfast ;" and, with a

little pout, she flung herself on a seat in the window.

"Did you wonder at my marriage, Marjory?" she asked, when Michael and Patience were deep in conversation.

"No," I answered; "I expected it."

"Well, I was weary of the whole thing, and I began to fear it would end in my being a *vieille fille*. So when Michael came, I said at once to Mama that it was best to accept him. You see there is little chance of poor Sir Giles coming back, if any. So it was worth while to run the risk. Michael is a little *sauvage* certainly; in short he is an Englishman, what can I say more? What, are you going already, Michael? I have not said half I have to say to Marjory."

"I have a busy morning at home, Antoinette. I will see at once about these cottages, Miss Fairfax."

"One moment, Marjory," said Antoinette as she drew me on to the lawn. "You will come up as usual to sit with Lady Bridges and read to her. Michael spoke as if I were to do it, but

that would be impossible. *Ciel! quel ennui!* you will be sure to come."

"You could hardly take my place with her now, Antoinette; and my life would be very sad without Lady Bridges."

"It is difficult to understand her making you cheerful, but I am glad you take it in that light, for then you are sure to come; and there is one thing more,—don't let Michael hear us,—Can you speak to Lady Bridges about the emeralds which are locked up at Coutts'. I may as well have them as let them wait for the chance of Giles coming back; but Michael, although he told me they were there, won't hear of my having them to wear; and there is no hope for me unless Lady Bridges speaks to him herself. Will you ask her?"

"I hardly think I can, Antoinette."

"Oh yes, you can do anything; and really it is the only fair course to take towards me, for, would you believe it, I had no *corbeille de nocces*. Not a *cachemire*, not a *parure*, not a thing. Michael said that he was a poor man with no money, but it was unheard of, and all my friends

were horrified. Madame de Lennay said that if it had been Louise, she should have broken the marriage off at the last moment. But there comes Michael ; try to help me if you can."

I looked at him as he came towards us and drew her arm in his. There was a weight of care on his brow, and a fixed look of sadness, unnatural in a man who was possessed, at last, of all he had ever coveted.

As they walked away into the wood towards the house, which might have been mine and was Antoinette's, I sighed ; had she not supplanted me again this third time !

What a desolate life mine was to look forward to I thought, as I wandered to the old alcove in the walled garden ; where the water and the lilies were the same, where I only was changed.

One short year ago I had sat there, and had sung over my work ; now I should never sing again. My life then was full of joy and hope, now I had turned my back on joy and hope for ever.

And yet, every one was very kind. Patience was gentle, and ever anxious to spare me any

painful remembrance ; and Lady Bridges understood that my grief was as deep as her's, and sometimes spoke to me of Giles, though she mentioned him to no one else.

And Thomas and Martha did their best to comfort me. Thomas would gather his roses for me, or implore me to gather them for myself, and Martha would bring her greatest treasure, a baby of a month or two old, and beg me to nurse it for a few minutes when she saw me looking sad.

"It ain't like common babies, Miss Marjory ; there's something special in the way she looks at you ; see there, Miss Marjory ! there's the look I mean ; it is enough to draw the sorrow out of the heart, as a warm plaster would draw pain out of the bones. And Sir Giles will come back, Miss Marjory ; he'll come back, take my word. He's only a-hiding himself to see if you forget him ; and he'll come back when you least expect him, as folks do in the old tales."

CHAPTER VI.

AND the years passed away, and brought no change to me. Lady Bridges' hair was nearly white, and there was a little Giles running about the old house, but there was nothing else to mark the time.

The yews cast their shadows across the Ghost's Walk as I passed along, and the griffins stood as stiffly on their stone perches, when I mounted the steps, as they had done when I was a child.

Was it the same Marjory or not, who went up the old staircase and walked down the gallery to the window where Lady Bridges sat?

The Marjory I remembered was light-hearted and bright; and I knew that I seldom, if ever, heard myself laugh now.

"Patience has been telling tales of you, my child," said Lady Bridges as she laid down her

knitting ; she says that you cough, and are always tired, and that she is going to take you away for a change. And I agree with her, Marjory," she continued, stroking my hair as I knelt down at the window, and looked down the walk.

"I think my little daughter wants a change ; we cannot spare you yet, Marjory."

"If Patience would go to Switzerland, I tell her that I could rest," I said. "I am sure he went there, and that I should hear something about him, Mother. I cannot believe they searched enough. I think I should be almost happy again if I knew anything for certain. I try to persuade myself that he is gone, quite gone ; but still I never hear a step behind me but I think it is his, and I never hear the bell ring without fancying I shall have news of him. I could leave you for a few weeks if she would go there."

"She will go anywhere you like, Marjory ; and you will come back bright and strong, as you were years ago. Michael!" she went on, as he and Antoinette entered the gallery ;

"Patience and Marjory are going to Switzerland to try and bring back roses to these poor pale cheeks."

"I don't think Marjory ever had any colour," said Antoinette, sinking into a soft chair. "I wish that Michael would see how far from strong I am, and would take me to Paris, as everyone else seems going abroad."

"Would you like to go to Switzerland, Antoinette?"

"And live among glaciers and mountains? No, thank you."

"Well, I think I shall come and fetch you and Patience home, Marjory, even though Antoinette won't go. I wish I could take you out, but I have so much to do this month. However, you can take James with you if you like."

"We shall manage very well alone, Michael; but really this is such a new idea, only talked of the last week, that it is ridiculous to look upon it as a settled thing."

"And you can drop me at Paris, Michael," said Antoinette; "or, as every one will have left Paris, I can go to the Baies de Mer."

"I offer to take you to Switzerland, but neither to Paris nor to the Baius de Mer. Have you any message to any one, Mother? I am going out."

"None, thank you, Michael;" and I saw her hands were shaking; they always trembled at the beginning of an altercation between Michael and Antoinette.

"You will leave that letter about re-letting Grosvenor Street alone for to-day, Michael," said his wife as he opened the door, and I saw her foot tapping petulantly beneath her gown.

"No, Antoinette. I have settled to write it when I come in;" and the door was shut quickly, and we heard him go down-stairs.

"It is too bad," said Antoinette; "a great deal too bad, keeping me mewed up here when the lease of that house is actually out, and there will be endless trouble finding a new tenant."

"Where is little Giles?" I said, anxious to change the current of her thoughts as I saw how nervous Lady Bridges was growing.

"Oh! there's another annoyance; he is not

looking well, and Michael says that if he ails anything I must give up my visit to the Castle ; it is too tiresome. He half consented to my going when I said you would be with Giles every day, but now you are going too, and I shall actually be kept at home."

"What are you going to do, Lady Bridges?" said I, as I saw her put down her knitting and draw her shawl round her.

"Antoinette says that Giles is ill. I must see to him at once," she said hurriedly.

"Let me go first and see what really is the matter, Lady Bridges."

"Yes, we will both go," said Antoinette, getting up lazily. "Dear me, Marjory, how disagreeable it is to live with anyone whose hair goes grey as young as yours has done! Six, seven white hairs, and you no older than I am! Can't you do something to stop it?"

"You will come back and tell me about the child?" said Lady Bridges.

"It is not likely to be anything serious. I saw him as I came in, and I am sure Patience will not leave home for another week. As Michael

will be away you would be lonely, Mother," I added in a low voice.

"I am very lonely always now," she answered, "except when you are here."

"Are you coming, Marjory?" called out Antoinette. "It really is too provoking," she said, as she shut the door and we went along the passage which led to the nursery, "to see Lady Bridges sitting at that window all day. I know what she is watching for, and, as I suppose the White Lady will come for me as well as for the others, I had rather she was left alone. If I were Mistress here the window should be walled up. But you will really stay and look after Giles while we are at the Castle?"

"Well, that is one comfort, though after all staying there is a great mortification when one has no ornaments. Michael gets harder to manage every day. I wanted him to keep the house in London unlet, and let me have a season, and be presented next year; but he says that he must be honest (as if I wished him to be anything else), and the London house is not his but Giles', and that it is nonsense for the

wife of a poor younger brother to be presented, and all that sort of thing."

"Really, Antoinette, you should take care not to frighten Lady Bridges for nothing," I said, as we opened the nursery door and saw little Giles riding violently on his rocking-horse. "The child is perfectly well."

"I am sure I was frightened enough myself, Marjory; I was sure I saw a rash, and he sneezed several times, and measles is such a horrid thing to have when you are grown up, it ruins the complexion. People have it twice or even three times now-a-days. And then my gowns were ready, and I had taken such immense pains about them that it would have been too provoking."

"Giles is quite well, Mother," I said, kneeling by Lady Bridges and taking her hands in mine. "You should not frighten yourself, darling; your hands are quite cold."

"I get so easily worried lately, Marjory! I dread a quarrel with Antoinette, and it is sometimes difficult to be patient."

"I shall stay at home, Mother. I shall tell Patience that I am quite well."

"She would not believe you, Marjory ; and as you said before you might hear of him, and I think I should die happier if I knew for certain that he was waiting for me on the other side."

"I think Lady Bridges is ill, Patience," I said that evening as we pored over Bradshaw together.

"How should she be anything else with the constant bickering between Michael and Antoinette. I quite dread going up there."

"Shall we stay at home then ?"

"Oh no, Marjory ! I have set my heart on your getting strong and well again ; and then, when your spirits return," . . . and Patience stopped.

I knew what she was thinking of, that then I might be able to forget Giles enough to marry. The only bit of worldliness left in Patience was the anxiety that the old family should be kept up, and, though I knew that it was a hope never to be fulfilled, I said nothing, but went on dotting down trains as she read them out.

"Do you wish to take James, Patience ? Michael says you can have him if you like."

"It would be a useless expense, Marjory ;

and your French is certainly good, while, as for mine, I was complimented upon my accent when I was as young as you."

But neither my French,—derived solely from Molière and Madame de Genlis,—nor the beauty of the accent Patience had prided herself upon, availed us when we reached Paris and sat wofully waiting for our luggage, or, as I had learned, even in that short period, to call them, *Colis*.

Boulogne was easy enough; every one spoke English there; but Paris! how should we get on? Every one spoke so fast, and gesticulated so madly, that the small knowledge of the language which I possessed grew smaller; and as for Patience, she forgot in a few minutes to parade her accent, and sat helplessly looking at me.

"*Cherchez vos bagages, Mesdames, Messieurs!*" and, as the great doors swung open and the tired crowd hustled through, I caught hold of Patience to prevent her being carried away.

"What is it, Marjory?—is it a revolution?" she said, as she clung to my arm.

"Bless my soul!" said a voice behind us, "Miss

Fairfax as I live, and Miss Marjory ! and both in difficulties ! Allow me to assist you. I am without encumbrance ; one small *coli*—nothing more. How many have you, Miss Marjory ? Where from ? Sit here, Miss Fairfax, till we come back ;” and Mr. Wynstay whirled me off, claimed our luggage with a vociferation worthy of a Frenchman, and established us in a carriage.

“Where to, Miss Fairfax ?” he said, as he took his seat opposite to us with a small bag by his side.

“Michael advised Meurice,” said I.

“Far too expensive ! try my little hotel, just off the Rue de Rivoli ; charming situation, excellent *cuisine*—Hotel de St. Jean, Cocher.”

It signified little to Patience and me where we passed the night, for Patience, having heard of the wickedness of Paris, had stipulated that the next day we should shake its dust from our feet ; and go forward, having seen nothing.

“How are you going to find your way to Switzerland ? Take me for a courier,” said Mr. Wynstay next morning, rubbing his hands. “I have business in Geneva, and going with you will be a pleasure.”

"We shall be most happy!" said Patience; and I wondered, till we reached the Gore de Ryon, how we should repay him for taking this expensive journey, almost solely on our account, till he gave me back my purse with the amount of a return-ticket to Geneva duly deducted.

It was quite worth while; for Patience and I, or at anyrate our luggage, would certainly have been lost; and as it was we arrived in Geneva safely at the end of two days.

"And now I shall say 'Goodbye!' Miss Fairfax. You will find your way very tolerably about the valleys and mountains. Is there anything that I can do for you before I go?"

"Yes! Mr. Wynstay, there is one thing. Are you quite sure that you and Michael searched each hotel-book five years ago?—you might have missed out some small hotel, as you were always expecting to find him further on."

"I am sure we did search everywhere; but if it is any comfort to you, as I have plenty of time, I will look through the books again," he said, good-naturedly; "but Giles was evidently not by way of putting his name down anywhere."

And Mr. Wynstay was right. The name of Sir Giles Bridges was written in no book in Geneva.

"We shall hear nothing of him here, you see, Miss Marjory! I sometimes think, with Michael, that he may have gone to America, and been detained there somehow. It is very sad,—very sad; such a fine property as it is, too. Many thanks for a most pleasant journey;" and Mr. Wynstay returned to Paris, while we crossed the lake and travelled up the valley of the Rhone, stopping at different villages and towns on our way.

I searched each travellers'-book of five years old, but no Giles was there.

"Let us stay here, Patience!" I said, as late one evening we descended from a diligence in a little village among the Alps. "The scenery is so wild; and yet the place looks comfortable, and the Pension is so good that they must be accustomed to travellers."

Patience was quite content, and here we stayed, walking and climbing, gathering and drying flowers, making friends with travellers, and parting

from them only to make friends with their successors.

The little daughter of the lady of the Pension showed me the prettiest paths, guided me to the best strawberries, and gathered me bouquets of wild flowers. She told me the history of the village and of each one of its inhabitants, and legends of the fir-woods through which we wandered.

"Mademoiselle must never walk here alone," she would say; "she does not know its dangers. If Mademoiselle was only to tread on a piece of bracken she would be in the power of the fairies, and we should see Mademoiselle no more. Maman thought I was lost two years ago—that I had trodden on the bracken and was gone for always; but I had only taken a wrong turn in the wood, and came back safe and sound."

"How well you look, Marjory!" said Patience one day; "you are nearly your old self again."

"And yet Michael comes this evening, and we go to-morrow, and we have heard nothing of Giles! I wonder if he came to this village and wandered among the mountains. Louison says

that people are often lost there, the paths along the precipices are so unsafe."

"I expect we shall never know, Marjory."

"Perhaps not," I answered sadly; "I will walk down the hill and meet the diligence, and I will take Louison; so don't get frightened if I am a little late."

"Is it true that Mademoiselle goes to-morrow?" said Louison, as we passed under the fir trees, and began to descend the hill.

"Yes, quite true, Louison! Are you sorry to lose me?"

"Ah yes, Mademoiselle! Will Mademoiselle accept a bouquet of wild flowers, which I have had the honour of drying for Mademoiselle, that she may remember little Louison in her country beyond the mountains?"

"I will keep your little bouquet among my treasures, Louison;" and then we left the fir trees, and sat down on a bit of rock from which we looked over the valley to the opposite mountains.

I wondered if Giles had sat upon this stone, and looked at the same view.

I wondered if it was from here he had started

on what I felt had been his last journey ; and was it on that mountain that he had, perhaps, missed his way. Why could not the hill-side tell its story, and set my heart at rest ?

“Mademoiselle should begin to return,” said Louison at last ; “the diligence is ascending the mountain, and will be at the Pension as soon as Mademoiselle. Has Mademoiselle had great sorrow ?” she went on as we reached the shadow of the fir trees.

“Why, Louison ?”

“Because, as Mademoiselle was looking across the valley her face was like Jeannette’s.”

“And who is Jeannette ?”

“Every one knows Jeannette ; have I not told Mademoiselle about her ? It is three years ago since she was going to be married, and her lover was so tall, and strong, and straight,—like one of those fir trees. But just before the wedding-day he was hunting the chamois, and was lost, and has never been found since. Jeannette lives with her mother this side of the village, and she works hard and is cheerful ; but when she looks towards the mountains her face becomes, as I said, like Made-

moiselle's just now; and when the men who search for lost travellers bring word that any one is found she seems to know it first of all, and she comes up the street so fast—so fast, with her hands clasped together like this; but she always goes away again;—they have never found him yet!"

"Poor Jeannette!"

"Yes, we all say, 'Poor Jeannette!' and there she comes, Mademoiselle! some one must have been found. See how fast she walks, with her hands clasped! She does not see us, Mademoiselle; let us follow her to the Justice, and see if it is he."

A tall young woman, in neat peasant's dress, was coming rapidly up the little street. Her face was pale, and had a look of expectation on it. She did not turn to the right or left, but went straight on to the little gabled house belonging to the Maire, every one falling back respectfully to let her pass.

"Let us be quick, Mademoiselle; the diligence is just behind us, and the place will be crowded; this way Mademoiselle;" and Louison opened a

way for me through the little crowd outside the Mairie, and motioning me to follow her, led me into a room to the left of the door.

I hardly knew why I followed her. I think I wanted to know if here was the end of Jeannette's story—a story so like mine; but she turned away from a table as I approached, and said quietly,

“He is not found yet.”

But some one was found.

On the table was a passport and a watch with a small gold chain, and on the chain was a little heart-shaped locket which I remembered well.

The men had not found Jeannette's lover, they had found mine.

The rattling of the diligence outside the door sounded in my ears as I stood spell-bound before the table.

There seemed to me to be a confused noise of wheels and cracking of whips, mingled with men's voices and the blowing of the horn; and then I thought that I was in the old garden far away in England, and that I had lost my footing, and was falling once more down, down into the pond.

I surely heard the rush of water as I sank, and

yet through it all, as if it came from a great distance, was Louison's voice, imploring some one to fetch the "frère de Mademoiselle," who was just descending from the diligence.

But the water of the pond was very cold, as I felt it closing round me; and then I came to myself, and saw that I was still in the little room in the Mairie, with Michael and Louison pouring water on my face and hands.

"I was afraid Mademoiselle was dead," sobbed Louison.

"What has happened, Marjory?" said Michael. I struggled slowly to my feet, and, laying my hand on his, with the help of a chair I crawled to the table. I pulled the watch towards me, and opened the little locket. There lay two small curls, and there were the words "Mother," and "Marjory," scratched inside the cover.

"There is no doubt now, Michael!"

"Oh, Marjory! how shall I tell my mother?" He could only repeat the same words as he walked up and down our sitting-room next morning before we started.

"How shall I ever tell her, Marjory? how shall

I ever do it ? and I, I who have been working for him all these years, who have never rebuilt a cottage or made a change without thinking how he would like it when he came back, for me to feel now that he is gone for ever. I have tried to believe it was impossible that he could be really gone ; and now to know for certain that I can never hear his voice again, and never see his face, is too terrible. Think what it is, Marjory ! when the last time we were together I spoke angrily, and the last time I heard his voice I refused to say ‘Goodbye ;’ but if it is hard for me to bear, what will it be for her ?”

“Let me tell her, Michael,” said I. “I can go on a little before you, and tell her all before you come. Give me the little locket, and she will understand it all. She has never expected him back.”

“Yes, it will be best for Marjory to tell her,” said Patience ; and then we took up our bags, and went down to the door to await the diligence. There were a great number of people assembled to see us go ; and the men took off their hats as we appeared, in reverence, as it seemed to me, for our great sorrow.

"Will Mademoiselle still take my little bouquet?" said Louison with a sob, and "Oh, Mademoiselle! will she say a word to Jeannette?"

The peasant girl came forward as I looked up. I saw that she could not speak, and that her eyes were full of tears.

I put out my hand, and she took it in hers; and then she tried to say something, but no voice came.

The diligence rumbled up, and the door was opened.

Jeannette still held my hand, and then suddenly raised it to her lips.

"We shall both meet our lost ones one day, Jeannette!" said I.

"Pray for me, Mademoiselle!" and then, as I stooped and kissed her forehead, she burst into tears and turned away.

"She has never cried since Pierre was lost, Mademoiselle," said a woman near me.

"*En voiture! En voiture!*" sounded from the diligence, and, as we clattered through the village and left the fir-trees behind, and then took our last look at the mountain which had been Giles'

grave, I wished that I could have been Jeannette with her search still unended.

I began to dread my interview with Lady Bridges as we drew nearer and nearer to England.

The journey back appeared so much shorter than the journey out had been. Lyons, Dijon, and Paris, seemed to have neared each other by hundreds of miles, and never had the channel been so smooth.

There was nothing to hinder our journey, nothing to give me one more quarter-of-an-hour, nothing to put off the evil moment.

We left Michael in London, and Patience and I sped away to the north.

I wondered how I should tell Lady Bridges; should I do it suddenly, or should I try to prepare her, and then show her the locket which would tell her all at once.

"What shall I do, Patience?"

"Wait till the moment comes, Marjory, and then do as you think best. Shall I come with you, and wait for you downstairs?"

"No, thank you, Patience! I shall tell her best if I am quite alone."

But my heart nearly stood still, and my hands felt as cold as ice as the flyman rang at the Hall door late in the summer evening.

Every moment till this one had gone so quickly, but now it seemed ages before they opened the door.

How long they were! and suppose that Lady Bridges were driving, and came back and found me there, she would see at once that there was something wrong.

"Ring again, flyman!" I said.

"I beg pardon, Miss, but we ain't giv'em time yet."

"Why, Marjory! is it you?" said a voice close to me, as Antoinette came up the drive in her garden hat and shawl. "Why are you come home alone? Something is the matter. Flyman! open the door, and let Miss Fairfax out. What is it, Marjory?" and, turning very pale, she took hold of my arm.

"Let us get into the house first, Antoinette," said I, hurrying up the steps and into the Hall.

"What is it, Marjory?"

"I will tell you here, Antoinette," I said as I

opened the dining-room door. "I am afraid of Lady Bridges hearing my voice."

"You are so slow, Marjory;" cried Antoinette, as I stopped and put my hand on the table to steady myself; "speak, you are so slow, what has happened? Is Michael hurt? Oh, I am sure he is hurt, and you do not like to tell me!"

"No, Antoinette! he is well, and will be here to-morrow;" and I stopped again, for I felt very tired and as if all my strength would go before I reached Lady Bridges.

"Then it is Giles," she said; "you have found Giles, and he is coming home."

"Yes, Antoinette, I have found Giles; but he will never come home again. I am come to tell Lady Bridges; where is she?"

"She is in the gallery; but stop, tell me if it is really true; one moment, Marjory! is it quite sure?" she cried, as I opened the door and passed through the Hall.

The butler and footman stared after me as I put my foot on the stairs, and, taking hold of the banister, went up slowly.

I heard Antoinette tell the servants that Sir

Michael would be back next day ; and then, with my heart beating violently, I reached the top of the stairs.

I tried to calm myself as I opened the gallery door and advanced slowly into the room. Lady Bridges was sitting at the end, close to the window. She was leaning back in her chair with her hands clasped ; and, even in that dim light, I could see that she was paler than when I left home. She did not hear me till I reached the fire-place, and then my footstep seemed to startle her, for she put her hand suddenly to her side and looked up.

“ Marjory ! ” I heard her say, — “ Marjory ! ”

“ Yes, Mother ! I am come back ; ” and, thankful that the fading light would hide my face, I knelt down by her chair.

“ And I am come up at once to see you, Mother ! Are you well ? ” and my voice sounded so strange that I hardly recognized it.

“ You are come back very suddenly, Marjory ! Michael told me not to expect you till next week ; ” and she sat up, and looked steadily at my face. “ Something has happened, Marjory ;

you have heard something of my boy,—don't keep me in suspense! Cannot you speak, Marjory?"

"We have found this, Mother!" and I put the little locket into her hand;—"do you think that it is his?"

She took it tremblingly, and looked long at the two curls. It was too dark for her to make out the names scratched inside the cover; and I waited for more questions as I knelt on by her side, and turned my face to the window that she might not see the tears which were running down my cheeks.

I heard her give a little sigh, and the hand which held the locket fell upon her lap; but no question came, and I still waited.

Were my eyes so blinded with tears that I could not see clearly, or was a figure in white, like the one I had seen five years ago, coming down the walk? I passed my hand over my face to dash them away, and looked again.

Yes, it was the White Lady once more! but this time with her arms stretched towards the old house, as if she were welcoming some one. She

seemed to utter no cry this time ; but I fancied she again beckoned with her hand, and then turned away, and went slowly down the walk.

Whom had she come to call ?

Had Michael met with some accident ? It could be no one else. But, if he were dead, the White Lady must come back again ; the mother could not survive her sons !

I turned my head towards her as the figure disappeared, but she had seen nothing ;—she was lying back, still and pale, with her eyes fixed on the locket in her lap.

She must be roused, I said to myself ; and, taking her hand in mine, I said,—“Is it his, Mother ?”

But the hand was cold, and no answer came.

“Are you ill, Mother?—tell me, are you ill ?” I said as I sprang to my feet. “Ambrose !” I cried, as I heard her in the next room, “bring salvolatile quickly ! Lady Bridges is fainting.” I rubbed her hands ; I chafed her temples ; I was growing more frightened. “Bring a candle, Ambrose ! and come as quickly as you can. What is the matter ? Why do you look so strange,

and why do you hold your candle in such a way as to throw the shadow over her face? Rub her hand, and give her the salvolatile—she will be better soon.”

“My Lady will never need your help and mine again, Miss Marjory!” said Ambrose; “My Lady is dead!”

.
And Antoinette lives in Grosvenor Street, and goes to Court and wears the family jewels; and I live on in the old parlour, and in the walled garden; where I sit in the alcove and look over the green pond and its water-lilies. I live on, working and waiting,—waiting for the time when I shall ascend the heavenly hill; and when, among the angels descending to meet me from the golden gates, I shall see Giles.

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15







